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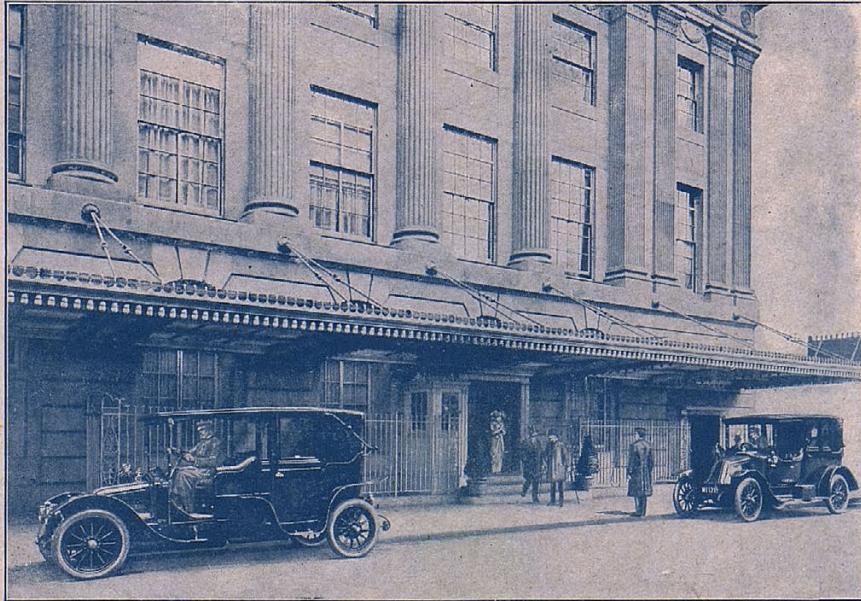
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**THE CONFESIONS OF A PHILANDERER**  
*The frank admissions of an American Anatol*

II  
**"THEY WENT IN SEARCH OF LOVE," by Cosmo Hamilton—**  
*A rare short story*

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*The story of the débutantes*

IV  
**BLUE BOSTON, by John Macy—**  
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# The SMART SET

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Issued Monthly by Smart Set Company, Inc., Printing Crafts Bldg.  
Entered at New York Post Office as second class mail matter

Eltinge F. Warner, Pres., and Treas.

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# The SMART SET

*The Magazine of the Promenade Deck*

## THE SYNCOPATED MARRIAGE

By William F. Jenkins

THERE was a time when you went along a long wooden hall, past one of those closets-under-the-stairs that they used to build in residences for the middle classes, and down a flight of stairs into what was once a cellar. They had torn out the two upper floors, so you were in a large, high, brick-walled room with a concrete floor. And on that floor were the tables of the restaurant. There used to be a girl who sang there, who hit the note accurately every time. By that you know it was a most unusual cabaret.

Now it has changed. There is a liveried attendant to take your hat, and the chairs in the ante-room are painted light blue and pink. But in the olden days,—which is to say quite six months ago,—a crowd of us dined there nearly every night.

Cary brought his moustache and a perfect profile to the gathering; Hamilton appeared in the perfect similitude of a prosperous business man. There were about six of us in all. The only really picturesque figure, however, was the artist of the bunch. Lou Graves wore a windsor tie, for atmosphere. In business hours he drew advertisements for a corset factory, but in the hours he devoted to Art he painted nudes and

composed what he claimed was music.

This particular evening he was late in appearing. We had been discussing things in general—which always means “woman”—and I held the floor.

“I maintain,” I declared firmly, “that there is no fool like a dam’ fool. Any man can be as big a fool as any woman, but his friends usually manage to prevent him from doing it. It is only after he is married that he is hopeless, because then his friends have no influence over him. That is why all the ‘booful baby’ letters are written by married men. That is why—”

They interrupted me urgently, so I became explicit.

“There is a man whose name I have forgotten,” I said, “but which Lou Graves can furnish, who takes his wife back regularly every six months. Three years ago he married her. He had eighteen hundred dollars in the bank. Eight months later she eloped with a neighbour and the eighteen hundred dollars. He did not follow her, but simply began to save up again. He thought of a new advertising scheme or something and in a year he had two thousand dollars. In the meantime she had opened negotiations and he let her come back to him. Three months later

she eloped with the two thousand dollars and another neighbour. In six months the usual thing happened. She repented, he took her back, and to show his confidence in her put his bank account in their joint names. She did not elope for four months this time. But two months ago she took the fifteen hundred dollars he had accumulated (I don't remember how) and went to Florida with still another neighbour. He says he will take her back again! Can you beat that for sheer idiocy?"

While waiting for an adequate reply I attacked my food.

There was a small, spectacled man with an apologetic beard at the next table. He was alone, and I noticed when I lifted my eyes after escorting a forkful of spaghetti to my mouth that he had been listening.

He hesitated a moment and then rose.

"I beg pardon," he said diffidently, "but would you mind if I said something to you about a similar case?"

We made room for him.

"I know a man who has done practically the same thing as your friend," said the spectacled person, "and I consider him a very intelligent man. He loves his wife. She does not love him. But—haven't you heard of cases where men have been so infatuated with women of the *demi-monde* that they have squandered fortunes on them—ruined themselves for what they must have known were mere momentary affairs with the women? So it is with this man. His wife—I speak from experience—is a woman with reddish hair. Moreover, she has a most damnable temper! She has eloped no less than three times, with no less than three different men, and each time her elopement has cost her husband his savings. But consider! He entertains a great, an incredible, love for her. So much so that if she were in truth a woman of the half-world, there is no doubt that he would furnish us with another example of the lengths to which men will go when inspired with such a passion. He saves, perhaps, five hundred dollars. For that his wife will return

to him. He has her to himself for a month at least, possibly two, and for as long after that as he can keep her from meeting someone else she likes better. Do you understand? He regards her exactly as a woman with whom he wished to conduct an affair, on her part a very mercenary affair. Would one of you gentlemen begrudge five hundred dollars for two months with the most charming woman in the world?"

"No!" said Cary. Cary entertains a pale lavender passion for a lady (of a chorus which shall be nameless), which passion is quite hopeless because of his financial condition.

Hamilton was less frank, but even he shook his head decidedly.

"Then, do you think this man is a fool? She is to him the most charming woman in the world. And why not? Cleopatra had a peculiar nose, Catherine the Great had freckles, Madame de Maintenon even had a double chin! Why shouldn't he love a woman with a hellish temper?"

There was no answer.

"I'm sure you will pardon my intrusion," continued the gentleman with the spectacles, again his apologetic self, "but I felt I had to justify this unknown man. I know exactly how he felt."

He started to back away from our table. We cordially invited him to stay, but he pleaded an engagement which must be kept, and left.

As he made for the Broadway doorway, to go up through the hall, he passed Lou Graves just coming in. We saw Lou give him a curious nod and then come quickly on to our table.

"Do you remember the fellow I told you about who takes his wife back every little while?" he asked me hurriedly. "Well, look at that chap just going out the door—"

We nodded to each other.

"He's the man!" we exclaimed in chorus.

"Nothing of the sort. Where'd you get that idea? He's the last man the woman ran away with!"

# A NIGHT OF MIRTH

By Perley Poore Sheehan

## CHAPTER I

YOU will remember, my beloved, that the young Count Jedra appeared like a comet in the social heavens of New York, Newport, the Harbor, the Pier; his advent long predicted by the social astronomers; arousing great interest and admiration for a space, disappearing afterward, no one knew whither.

You will remember how he looked. He was twenty-five or twenty-six. He was very straight and slender and fine. He had watchful dark eyes. He was always responsive. His face had that odd quality of profound melancholy flickered over with humor.

I do not blame you if you also thought thoughts in the young count's presence. I did not blame you even then. In my own way, I was under the spell of him almost as much as you were—found myself watching him, wondering about him, remembering him when he was absent.

Sex is a pyramid. Only the broad and heavy base of it is rooted in the earth. At its greatest altitude it becomes a point without dimensions.

Thus, the nearer we come to the angels, all men are women, all women men.

I suppose that this explains to some extent the affection which the young count inspired in so many of us. He was of an old family. By tradition and blood he was very far up—too well-bred to be polite, too civilized to be other than kind; with the best characteristics of a woman of sixty, a boy of ten.

How different he was—from Hough, for example!—Hough, with his two

hundred pounds of tough fibre, his red masque, his twinkling eyes, his financial brain, his big cigars!

And yet, even Hough was not without that counterbalance of opposing sexes within himself—without which men would be brutes, and women idiots.

As witness to which, consider the lady Hough selected to be his wife, when his judgment was mature, when experience had taught him what he wanted. Of his first wife, who died twenty years ago, I know as little as you do. I can only guess. He married her when he was young. She was of the masculine type, most likely, the kind our poor, silly grandparents referred to as a "help-meet." The first wives of most men who marry young are generally like that, dear and useful in the early years, but, oh, so boresome when one has arrived! Of the second Mrs. Hough, who divorced him, we merely know that she is virtuous, poor thing! She is quite out of it, quite forgotten. But Madame Hough, the Third! An *objet d'art!* An *article de luxe!*

They say that Hough actually did acquire her while on one of his periodical raids on the art collections of Europe. He does have a quite remarkable faculty in this respect, you know. He is forever turning up queer treasures which others have overlooked—a wild boar, you might say, with a snout for truffles.

I think it happened in Siena.

There was one of those American families living over there—just enough income for Malaga grapes and a dozen servants, but not possibly enough to keep them going for a month on the same footing here in their own absurdly misconducted land. The family lived

in a *palazzo*—one of those big, empty, whitewashed *palazzi* of the Middle Ages. Empty, I say, although of course the family had accumulated the usual lot of tawdry and smelly stuff lent to them by the dealers in antiques on the outlook for customers. Lord only knows how they ever did get Hough to come in and look over the place. Perhaps he had heard of Bianca.

That's the name of the present Mrs. Hough.

At any rate, there was only one other object in the entire establishment which Hough considered worthy his notice. Perhaps you have seen it—that Fifteenth Century coffer in the Metropolitan? If you haven't, it's hardly worth the trouble. It's in the basement, in the north wing. The place is like a crypt, and quite as depressing. We all believe in ghosts. Ghosts are all that give value to old furniture, old tapestries.

Possibly, Hough knew that he was acquiring a ghost when he acquired the coffer from his Bianca's family—with the understanding that Bianca herself should be a part of the bargain.

There were a number of reasons why Bianca should be included—all of them good.

In the first place, of course, there was the money. The family was dreadfully poor. The two carriages they kept up were becoming quite scandalous—things like that.

Then, Hough was the only possible sort of man that this girl could marry. Boys, you know, of the nubile age will play with dolls, but it's only play. It's the old men—old and wise—who know that such play is the business of life itself, that it can't come too high, even at the price of marriage.

Besides, without Bianca the coffer itself would have been incomplete in a way. It was made out of olive-wood, richly carved. You can see for yourself—if you ever care to go look at it in the Museum—how deep and elaborate this carving is. The thing's almost as big as an Egyptian sarcophagus, yet worked out with the detail of a Gothic cathedral. The wooden cover

of it is held down by an intricate lock attached to the iron box which fills the wooden case. There is yet an inner skin of sheet-lead. None but Bianca had ever learned to open the coffer without endangering that precious woodwork.

And, now that it's safe in the Museum, it will never be opened again, most likely, because—

But this, beloved, is the thing I started out to relate.

## CHAPTER II

COUNT JEDRA had a maternal grand-aunt who lived in Tuscany. His family is one of those which have connections scattered all over Europe—a title here, an entailed estate over there, a *carnet-militaire* somewhere else. Jedra happened to be spending his summer vacation with his grand-aunt in Tuscany.

It was a lonely place, but the loneliness of it was probably no greater than that which he had become used to. He had a park full of ilex and old marble all to himself to play in. You have seen these Italian gardens, as formal as cemeteries and about as gay. There is nothing sadder in this world of ours than perfect beauty—the Nirvana of effort, of imagination.

Young Jedra was seated on a marble bench under the yew-trees in the back of this garden, one afternoon, reading a book. The yews overhung a wall which shut the garden in and the common world out. At least, that was the purpose of it—a sort of stone and mortar *Almanach de Gotha*—although such measures can never be effective, of course, so long as people remain essentially biological. He looked up from his book. In the dark shadows of the yews he saw a girl. She was crouched there on the top of a wall and had apparently been watching him for some time before he turned. The shadows of the yews were dark green, almost black, and in these the girl shimmered all white and gold.

She was dressed in white—in a thin white frock that barely reached her

knees, white stockings on her slim and shapely legs. Moreover, her skin was very fair. She was of that blond type occasionally seen in Italy, with violet eyes, and crinkly hair containing every shade of gold from an intimated green to the orange-red of the Siena earth when burnt. It appeared that this girl also had been lonely.

Loneliness, my beloved, is a powerful solvent. It eats through differences of age and caste. It rapidly turns the most solid morality into a puff of vapor, changes air-tight conventionality into a mere sieve.

Before very many minutes had passed, then, Jedra and the girl were there on the marble bench side by side. They had not only the old park to themselves, but the long Italian afternoon, as well. The grandaunt dozed. Such servants as weren't drinking wine and gossiping in the kitchens were at work in the fields.

The two young people there in the depth of the garden were therefore enveloped in a solitude and beauty as complete as that of Eden.

The only thing which appeared to be awake and active besides themselves was a spider which was building her web, a few yards away, against the deep blue sky, between a tunnel of ilex and a moss-grown statue of Hermes. The spider had a little tuft of white floss to mark the center of her web; and around this, in gradually diminishing circles, she made her way, very, very deliberate, stringing mesh after mesh.

The spider was on the outer rim of her projected web at the time that the girl seated herself at Jedra's side. Thus far there had been scarcely any conversation between them at all, no more than there might have been between a faun and a nymph, or two young deer. Speech is deadly to the most elemental relationships, and this relationship of theirs was elemental—of the sort which flourished in the great silences—mystical and godlike—before we degenerated and began "to talk."

In such silence, though, beloved, our souls stand forth naked. The girl felt

this—like Eve, was ashamed; like Eve, sought to clothe her nakedness with, at least, some tiny fig-leaf of conversation. She was looking at the spider.

"See," she said, "it begins to spin the second circle."

She said this softly, breathlessly, for Jedra's hand had come in contact with her own, remained there.

"How slowly she goes," breathed Jedra.

He, like her, was exalted. They barely moved. To have looked at each other, with their material eyes, would have been a desecration. To have spoken a word about that which occupied their spirits would have been the Fall of Man.

"I thought that spiders were 'he,'" lisped the girl.

Jedra's hand had crept over hers. They were both tremulous—as light and tremulous as butterflies.

"'She,'" whispered Jedra, "for 'she' is doing her housework."

"Building a house," said the girl, chidingly; "and carpenters are men."

By the time that the spider had reached her third round, the girl was leaning against Jedra, had drawn her feet up to the marble bench, had accepted him into perfect friendship. And still they watched the spider, dared take no outward notice of the stupendous facts of the new and marvelous world.

Each knew that what was transpiring now was the dawn of Creation; that of these facts beating their invisible wings all about them—like homing-pigeons back from the blue—their knowledge, perceptions, and dreams, would thereafter forever consist. Yet they dared whisper only those futile, foolish things about the spider.

A common experience, beloved, for all of us! Souls, like children, or untamed animals, play best when unwatched, uncriticized.

"Ariadne," said Jedra. "They call spiders Ariadne, and Ariadne was a girl."

"Tell me about her," she pleaded; and her voice was all but inaudible, for Jedra's hand was hovering about her

shoulder, ready to press her to him more closely still.

He told her about the daughter of Minos.

They may have been aware of that other reason why they watched the spider with such breathless interest. The spider was an Ariadne for them. Her web was the thread leading them out of a labyrinth. With every move that the spider made they came a little closer to the open daylight. By the time that the mysterious creature was spinning her fourth circle against the ineffable blue, Jedra had his arm clasped about the yielding shoulders. At the fifth circle, the girl's gold and fragrant head was against his face.

What would happen when Ariadne reached the white mark at the center of her web—and they had come to the open end of their labyrinth? Can you imagine anything but that this was the question in the hearts of both of them?

Yet the peace of the garden remained perfect. The moss-grown Hermes lived, but he looked down upon them with perfect complacency. It was like that with the tunnel of ilex, the yews, the spider and its web. For, in the beginning of things, there was a perfect harmony, a perfect understanding, between all things, whether animate or not. And this was the beginning of things—the first verse, *mon amie*, of the Book of Genesis.

The spider reached the center of her web. Jedra and the girl had reached the open end of their labyrinth. Did the light blind them right away? Most likely. They fluttered there, dazzled—the black-greens and purples, the ultramarines and yellows of the old garden astonishing them as if they had never seen the like before.

Then, for the first time, the girl raised her face to Jedra's. She closed her eyes and smiled.

He pressed his lips to hers. And—  
“How shall I call you in my dreams?” he asked.

She answered: “Bianca!”

### CHAPTER III

ADOLESCENCE! We are all of the aristocracy then!—the favorites of the world—all of us poets, magicians, presidents and kings, millionaires! When we were adolescent, we were as the gods and goddesses of Olympus—superhuman in our powers and desires, superhuman in our knowledge and indulgences. We were all of an unearthly beauty then. Our loves were unutterable heaven.

It was eight years ago that Jedra and Bianca met in their garden. She was but thirteen, he only a few years older.

Their intimacy continued throughout the remainder of the summer.

Bianca's people, poor though they were, had managed to rent a little cottage and garden, for the hot months, out in the Tuscan hills. It was just by accident that this place adjoined the park of Jedra's grandaunt. An accident!—and yet, the real history of the world is made up of such accidents as these. The great event is always accidental, so far as human will is concerned. It's the deft touch, not the killing effort, which marks our lives for better or for worse.

Jedra and Bianca were adolescents then. They accepted the conditions which the gods had given them with that perfect serenity with which youth accepts all things.

Each afternoon the girl climbed over the wall and joined Jedra in the garden. They no longer had to look away and talk about spiders when they were in each other's society. They were one. Jedra was a god, and Bianca was a goddess. They owned the earth, made all the laws of the earth, spoke its only language.

The only time that it wasn't sunshiny afternoon when they met was the night before Jedra was to leave.

He proposed it.

They met in that same place where they had met for the first time. It was night, but the sky was almost as blue as ever. About the only change in the physical aspect of things was that the

yellow of the landscape was changed to silver, for, instead of the sun, there was a brilliant moon—an Italian moon, fit to commit murder under, or to pant one's own life away in a love-song.

Still, each found the other transfigured as well.

Bianca was no longer the child of thirteen. Magic had touched her and made her a woman. She might have been a woman; only, my beloved, no woman other than you could ever have such a clear perception of life, such a philosophy of sadness and joy, life and death, of tenderness and sacrifice, as were Bianca's that night.

The moonlight darkened the shadows about her eyes, refined the already fine sculpture of her face. It turned her hair into a cloud of light. It gave her a beauty of a kind to bring tears to the eyes of almost any man.

And Jedra was always responsive to an appeal like that.

He could see from the way that she looked at him that, in her eyes, he was the ultimate word of the universe. There was something about her expression to recall the faces of the nuns he had sometimes noticed in the church of San Giovanni, at early mass, when they were still fasting.

He put his arms about her. She was as pliant to his will as if he had imagined her. She was just that—an imagination incarnate; an imagination possessing weight and warmth, perfume and breath.

It is doubtful if young Jedra appreciated all this. The actual fact is never appreciated at the time of its reception. We take in our experiences as we stock our cellars. It is only later, as we discuss them at our leisure, that we become fully apprised of their qualities good or bad.

There came to them, very faintly, the chimes of the Sienese cathedral; just as faintly, the singing of some peasants, somewhat drunk, going home from a christening or a funeral. An owl wafted out of the yews and across the moon. The air was heavy with the smell of boxwood and tuberoses. With

that and, doubtless, the faint suggestion of sandalwood which Donna Bianca to this day forever has about her.

Jedra stood there for a while looking down into the girl's rapt and seraphic face—she thinking, perhaps, that she had come to the end of the world and willing to have it so.

What did Jedra do? How shall I express it? His soul was exalted; his body was as if non-existent.

For all I know, he may have even breathed that little prayer in Italian which he was to say again on a certain other night when he and Bianca were together.

But, ah, Bianca would not have it so!

The temptation of St. Anthony, *mon amie!*—is this not in the private record of every man?

"We are all alone," whispered Bianca.

"I am yours!—yours!" she thrilled.  
"No one can see."

"The world is very beautiful," Jedra replied. "We must keep it so, my darling Bianca. It would no longer be beautiful if I did anything which would make you sad, which would hurt you."

"You don't understand," she whispered. "Nothing that you can do can make me sad except not to love me; nothing hurt but that."

"You're only a child," he said.

"No, no!" she stormed, softly. "Kiss me, Guido!"

The moonlight and the perfume thickened until the breathing of both of them was constrained to the point of extinction—until Jedra's soul, at least, was quavering beyond the limits of his body as if half resolved to become a ghost. He forced this spirit of him back into his body, forced himself to speak.

"We must say adieu, my Bianca," he faltered.

The girl was still looking up at him with that face of rapture. As his meaning became clear, there came into his expression a touch of despair. None of its tenderness was lost, none of its perfect devotion. It was just that—a touch of despair.

He kissed her again.

She went away.

It appears that Jedra learned something about the circumstances of Bianca's family. When the grand-aunt died, a year or so later, he ransacked the house of the garden where he and Bianca had met. The olivewood coffer was the most valuable thing the house contained. This he sent to the *palazzo* where Bianca lived.

She had never seen him again since that moonlight night. He had never even written to her. But she must have known that it was he who had sent it.

She claimed it for her own.

She discovered how to open it, a secret she kept to herself. And, anyway, for years her people were afraid to sell it, not knowing whence it came. And into it Bianca put a spray of ilex, a little branch of yew, a bit of marble from the statue of Hermes, then—God and herself only know what memories.

#### CHAPTER IV

You know the house which Hough built, up there on the Avenue. There is not a stoné in it which wasn't brought over from Italy. That gives the measure of Hough. A big, big man!—as big as a baron of the Middle Ages. The poor man is forced to pawn his conscience when he wants to sin. Not so the rich. They can commit enormities, if they care to, and pay for them properly by the munificence of their benefactions—thus keeping their consciences sweet and clear. Why shouldn't a man commit a murder, or buy a bride, if he be willing—and able! —to build such a temple in expiation?

True, Hough built the house on the Avenue to his own more perfect pleasure. It was to be the casket of this perfect gem he was bringing back with him from Italy. It would have been incongruous to house her in American granite. Quite impossible!

The house was built in the best lines of the Italian Renaissance. It was huge, yet almost severely classical. The cost of it must have been staggering even

to a man of Hough's conceptions, for not only had the material of the building itself been imported from Italy but all the decorations of it as well—tapestries, carpets, crystal chandeliers, all the furniture—from the Venetian chairs in the lobby to the electropneumatic organ in the great music-room.

But what was cost!

Hough wasn't trying to—*épater les bourgeois*. He wasn't even trying to make an impression on the Avenue set. You know what a savage contempt he has—or affects—for the opinions of others in the mass. He was trying—whisper it!—to win the love of his wife.

The love of one's wife, beloved, is generally one of the least treasured things which men possess; and rightly so, no doubt. Why should a prisoner cherish his chains?—the ox cleave to his yoke? Men were free once. It is woman who has domesticated him. Rather noble than otherwise his faunal cravings, *mon amie!* The husband-errant is but a throwback to the glorious days of liberty. Why otherwise do we feel this invariable, secret scorn for Jones, who is "happily married"? Yet here was Hough crazily in love with this girl he had bought, using all his might to make her love him in return.

Poetic justice, doubtless, which the world has often seen—a poet, or a politician, or a millionaire, taking unto himself a human plaything only to find, too late, that it is his own sawdust, not the doll's, which is to be scattered to the winds!

That Hough was quite insanely enamoured of his wife, very few, of course, were permitted to guess.

Hough himself gave no sign of it, apart from that house of his. He was still the robber baron, implacable, gruff and immeasurably keen, so far as his friends could observe. But, as a matter of fact, most observations, where Hough was concerned, were now limited to his wife. It was only natural that Hough should be surprised, from time to time, staring at his Bianca through narrowed eyes—as he digested his dinner, as he smoked his big cigars.

For other men acquired the habit of looking at her like that, whenever they decently could.

There was that about her which made them speculate. Ah, yes! There is that about every woman with a flame in her—so long as she is young; especially if the flame be sagaciously contained!—only if the flame be sagaciously contained. The lamp without a chimney flickers and smokes. No good! But put the crystal chimney on, and the human moths and beetles come winging in.

It was like that with Bianca.

She was twenty. She was still as white and gold as the day Jedra first saw her in his Italian garden. There was still that flame inside of her that had brought his hand to hers, drew his arm about her yielding shoulders, magnetized his lips from hers. The flame shone in her violet eyes, that rather severe but red and passionate mouth. But the flame was guarded—even from Hough.

Still, it was like the man to go on preparing for victory as if victory were absolutely sure. You can imagine what a monument to failure that house of his would have been, in case of failure. Only if he won Bianca's love would the big establishment be possible at all.

For Bianca was one of those rare—those very rare—women to whom the love of a single man is important.

When most women speak of love it is with the private thought that they have missed their calling, a tiny, secret envy of—of Phryne, let us say. And men would have it so.

But Bianca was not quite like this. Her power of love was concentrated. You could see it in her eyes. Her eyes were given to flashes—as if she suddenly remembered something, someone. And then, some day, so more than one man must have told himself, those eyes of hers would find what they were looking for. After that—heaven or hell!—nothing would matter very much.

Hough saw himself in the favored position.

Physically she was his, and that was

something. He had bought her and paid for her. The papers were in order, sealed, and put away. He could carry her around the world in his yacht, if he wanted to; or shut her up in a castle, somewhere, if he wanted to. Practically, he had the power of life and death over her. He had the strength and the imagination—and the temperament, too—for a good, old-fashioned, Mediæval tragedy, if it came to that.

As a matter of fact, more than once he must have been allured by the thought of violence in this connection. But violence was not what he wanted. Violence might serve as a sedative, later on. What he wanted, though, was Bianca's love.

He wanted it more than he had ever wanted anything in his life before.

And he had wanted many things since the day of his birth. He had got them, too—everything from the scalp of a little country banker who had annoyed him, right on up to the friendship of a pair of Kings. And Hough was going to get the thing he was after now. One of these days—or nights!—those violet eyes of his imported Bianca would flash to his, remain there, having found at last the thing they so perpetually sought.

The big house on the Avenue was nearing completion. The Florentine frescoers were already taking down their scaffolding.

Finally, one day, an automobile-van backed up to the *porte-cochère*, and a dozen big black men unloaded a quilted bit of furniture under the direction of Pisani, Hough's Italian butler. It was Bianca's coffer—the Mediæval *cassone* which Jedra had given her. Under Pisani's eye, this was carried up to the third floor of the house, where Bianca was to have her apartments.

Bianca came to look at it that afternoon. She came accompanied by Hough.

Bianca, as if in keeping with her name, was, as usual, dressed in white. She came in her white-upholstered limousine. And anyone could have seen

that she was kind to Hough. Anyone could have seen that she was going to make him a worthy consort. If he was a baron—or a king, she was a baroness—or a queen.

But as for her loving him, one might have doubted it—even Hough!—until that night.

It was a night of mirth.

## CHAPTER V

THE housewarming of the new Hough mansion was to be the big event of the Autumn season. It is only now and then that an event like that comes off—when guests are brought from as far away as Chicago and even New Orleans on special trains, when Boston and Philadelphia, the *Directory of Directors* and the *Social Registers*, are all jumbled up.

All a part of Hough's campaign to win Bianca's love, perhaps. The thing was certainly a splendid compliment to her. Splendid, and likewise disconcerting to Bianca's reserve.

Ah, to be gazed at by the aristocracy of even a republic—and, perchance, to be desired! A beautiful woman would always give her soul for that—give it to him who had brought the thing to pass. So Hough must have known. He understood women. As, indeed, what man does not? For, after all, women are merely unmasculine men; as men are unfeminine women. There is no absolute demarcation—no radical difference, even, save as you approach the two extremes.

And there were to be precious few regrets.

The third Mrs. Hough had been kept rather out of sight, as yet. They called it the "honeymoon," as Hough took his bride on his yacht into Northern waters, kept her for a while on that island he owns near Labrador, then back for a look in at Newport before translating her to his other private heaven up the Hudson. Still, enough men and women had seen her to have started some very lively tales adrift—not very loud, of course—about her beauty,

about her precedent poverty, about that lurking suggestion of flame which made other women—all save you, beloved—a bit tepid by comparison.

Did she know that all the time Hough was thus carrying her about, that she was just missing an encounter with Jedra? Did Jedra know who the third Mrs. Hough really was?

Who shall ever tell?

It must have been by the barest chance that they failed to find themselves face to face at the Pier, at the Harbour, at Newport. But meet they didn't. Most likely neither of them suspected the other's presence in America—nor on earth, perhaps.

Every separation is a death.

It is better to think that when Jedra and Bianca did meet, they did so unforewarned.

Hough, of course, had never known anything about that meeting of theirs eight years ago, in the Italian garden. Perhaps it would have made no difference had he known about it. Hough was the man who had always had his own way, would always have it. There are men like that. Steam up, they hurl themselves ahead toward the distant terminal over the right-of-way the gods have prepared for them. If you don't want to be mangled, get off the track. Perseverance! Folderol! They'll be to the top of the Great Divide while the persevering are sweating up the foothills.

But Hough, at any rate, had invited Jedra to this housewarming of his—did so at the request of some friend or other.

It was well along toward midnight—when the night of mirth was just properly begun—that Jedra drove up to the new house. He had been stopping at the Metropolitan. It was a public Victoria which brought him. He dismissed the driver, and, as he did so, it must have occurred to him that he had thus severed all but the last thread of responsibility which still held him to America.

His luggage and papers had already been sent to the steamer which, early on

the following morning, was to carry him back to Europe. At the Metropolitan, he had bidden farewell to such of his friends as he did not expect to meet later on at Hough's great affair. To the cable office he had sent various messages in code.

Even if he died, the affairs of the world would not be greatly disarranged. He must have thought of this. These were times when men disappeared—men as important even as Mr. Hough—with no great accompaniment of lamentation in the world. Still, even a small inconvenience was rather more than Jedra would willingly inflict on his friends. That was the sort of youth he was. To the famous old statesman, therefore, who had sent him on the mission to America, Jedra sent off an affectionate unofficial message, as well, telling him how this and that should be done thus and so in case he, Jedra, should, peradventure, fail to appear.

But it was a night of mirth in the big house. There was no doubt about that.

Mirth beset the great building like a sort of fairy cloud—a special atmosphere made up of light, and perfume, and music, all strained and muted. As if this cloud itself were a precious thing, not to be carried away in too large quantities by the vulgar, a fairly tight cordon of policemen and detectives were on guard. But once under the lofty *porte-cochère* the prospective guest found himself at once transported from a region of fog to an atmosphere as brilliant and heady as that of a mountaintop.

There was no end of footmen in the Hough livery. Sturdy chaps they were, too; not a lean shank or an odd length among them. They flanked the stairway of honor leading up to the almost unbelievable spaciousness of the first floor. From up there, somewhere, in a region of pure light, two bands of music were holding forth—an unending river of harmony to float the argosies of laughter and conversation.

And the perfume!

Our sense of smell has no vocabulary, beloved. They even say that in

heaven there is no more smelling and tasting than there is the thing properly called wedlock. Heaven might be heaven without marriage, *mon amie*. But a heaven without the essence of flowers—ah, never!

Up through the light and the music and the perfume, then, behold our young Jedra making his way.

He took his time. He made his progress *en connoisseur*. Naturally, he had heard a lot about Hough; for Hough's reputation was international. And it moved young Jedra not a little to see that so much about him was of a nature to recall the Italy he knew and worshipped.

Even more!

As he mounted the steps—slender and sensitive, somewhat in the nature of a girl—his intuition spread its wings, swept on ahead of him, came back with a baffling message; once more beat its wings and was gone, again returned.

Jedra paused where he was and closed his eyes. He was as unconscious of all those petrified funkeys to the left and right of him as they, apparently, were of him.

To Jedra, not only the funkeys but all the present world went out. The brilliant light became the light of a Tuscan moon. The river of harmony became the murmur of a voice. The complex perfume became a smell of box and tuberoses with an odd, all-but-forgotten suggestion of sandalwood.

"Bianca!"

Even the name came back to him.

After eight years of separation—of practical death—the name came back to him as that of a young and ghostly angel.

During those eight years Jedra had loved many times. Constancy, my beloved, is a quality of stocks and stones but not of human hearts. Every man has a harem of angels in his heart. Nights, when the sultan would be lulled to sleep, when the sultan would be amused, he quests among his heart-hoarded favorites for that one who happens to be delectable to his mood.

Jedra's eyes were closed but a second or two.

He mounted the remaining steps. He looked out across the shimmer and shine of a reception-hall. He saw her, over there—his white and gold maiden of the garden.

Bianca, in very truth!

He stood there, reflecting pleasantly on the miracle of this, yet not so greatly moved, perhaps. He was perpetually meeting charming and beautiful friends.

But, at that moment, Bianca discovered him.

## CHAPTER VI

THE place was crowded at the time. Bianca herself was the center of a far-flung group. Somewhere in this group was the man who had married her—powerful, smelling of cigars, down from the smoking-room for an observation. He was like the captain of a liner. He was more than that. This was his ship. This was his ocean. He was cruising for the Golden Fleece and he was going to bring it back.

You can see him as he stood there—with his mighty shoulders only slightly bowed, that red masque of his, those small and piercing and all-seeing eyes. Two beautiful women and three or four men were paying him homage. With a grunt and a word he could make them titter and roar.

"Oh, Mr. Hough!"

But past the shiny brow of one of the men and the tiara of one of the women and through a shifting cleft of heads and necks beyond, Hough was secretly watching his wife. She was almost facing him, yet unconscious that he was looking at her.

Could it have occurred to Mr. Hough that up to this present time his glance meant no more to her than the glance of any other man? Perhaps!

For the hundredth or two hundredth time he was taking note of that rather imperious but passionate mouth as red as blood, of the bold and delicate mould-

ing of the jaw and cheek; then of those violet, disquieting, almost perpetually questing eyes—eyes that flashed, but saw not the thing, or the person, they were looking for.

"Mr. Hough, dear!"

"John, old man! What's the—"

No more than that; for a man of Hough's measure does not care to have his moments of distraction or obsession remarked upon, not even by his intimates. And Hough was suddenly aware that he had given a start, both facial and bodily, as if a brutal finger and thumb had tweaked at his very soul.

There was reason for this. Hough himself had had a sting of intuition—or was it just observation?—as deep as any which Jedra himself had ever experienced. Perhaps it was the feminine element in Hough.

On the feminine element of his nature the thing reacted, at any rate—a stab of pain, a puff of sickening jealousy, a gust of rage; all these violent enough to contort his beef.

Into Bianca's eyes had come a look.

It was only a flash, but it rent the curtain of her Holy of Holies, so far as Hough was concerned. Bianca had seen whatever it was she had looked for so long. And Hough divined the truth. Bianca had given her love to another. This other was among his guests.

Who was it?

The mirth was steadily mounting. There is a queer little lull, every now and then, even in the merriest of festivals, where everyone is laughing and talking, even where two great bands play their inflammable concoctions perpetually over the flames; and in every such lull, if you happened to be passing where the acoustics were right, you could hear the steady popping of champagne corks and the clinking of glasses. The big house was being properly warmed. The event was by way of becoming one more staggering success in Hough's career.

But Hough! He looked at his

friends and smiled. He said things which obviously delighted them. Yet his eyes were as if blind. His ears were deaf to the sound of his own voice.

Here in this new house of his was someone whom Bianca loved. Present was the man who held that one thing in the world which Hough himself coveted, which Hough had made the whole purpose of his life, which Hough now knew, even if he didn't know it before, had been the goal of his career from the beginning.

Hough, in the rôle of perfect host, passed on to another group of friends. He swaggered a little when he walked. His head was held a trifle higher than usual.

"No wonder that he is looking more triumphant than ever, with a house like this, with a wife like her!"

Hough knew very well what everyone was saying.

But, having honored this fresh group of friends with his society, he once again placed himself in a position where he could keep a fairly constant watch on the lady of the house. There were many guests present who were barely known to him by sight, some whom he had never seen. For a while there drifted through his thought a miasmic wraith which gibbered at him that the person Bianca loved was really some friend of his.

To the all but soundproof inner recess of Hough's brain where he almost always did his more serious thinking, and in which he was doing his thinking now, there came a slight impact of sound. He took note of it.

"Jedra! The young Count Jedra!"

"In the country on a diplomatic mission!"

"—broken more than one heart.  
*How beautiful he is!*"

The last phrase was what sounded the alarm-bell in Hough's watchful darkness. The praise of a quality which one lacks utterly has ever a harsh sound to one's ears, beloved. And Hough, who almost better than any other man could appreciate the ex-

quisite quality of an Eighteenth Century snuff-box, a K'ang-hsi jar, an antique chasuble—is it conceivable that Hough was unaware that his own presence was devoid of beauty?

He had heard about Jedra, of course. He had scanned again and again the lists of guests which his secretary had prepared for the present event. He knew that Jedra had spent much of his time in Italy, that it was possibly on behalf of the Quirinal that Jedra was now in America. Then he saw him.

Jedra was beautiful.

Hough must have perceived this with all the fineness of perception which he would have brought to the appraisal of a newly discovered portrait by Largillière. There was, in fact, something of the Largillière about Jedra—the suggestion of an inner melancholy flickered over by humor; vivacious eyes which, quite recently, might have shed a tear or two.

Hough saw his Bianca extend her hand, saw Jedra bow over it with a compelling warmth and grace. And—

"John," queried a boresome friend of his, "just how long should that latest Mocha be kept before it's fit to drink?"

Hough turned heavily.

Strangely enough, he was rather glad to talk about coffee for a minute or two.

"Preferably, six years; but Mustapha Bey—"

He heard himself giving various details of information which had come to him from his Turkish agent. But, all the time that he was doing this, he was beating a retreat through the corridors of his complex brain to that all but soundproof inner chamber where self-communion was possible. Only, this time, he was not returning alone. Back into his lair he scurried, taking with him the two bright objects he had discovered in the outer day.

One of these objects was the figment of his wife, the other the semblance of Jedra.

## CHAPTER VII

THERE was no special significance immediately apparent in this meeting of Jedra and Bianca, not even to themselves. So often is it like that. Each one of us, *mon amie*, has looked forward to some encounter with an expectation equivalent to dread—whether the dread be that of a dreadful joy or a deathly revulsion. The encounter takes place. No cymbals crash. The heavens remain in place. You wonder if the other guessed your secret thoughts.

Thus Jedra and Bianca drifted apart a few minutes after he had brought her fingers to his lips.

She had inquired concerning his stay in America. Quite casually, so it would seem, he had told her that he was booked to sail early on the following morning. Even while he was telling her this she was already splitting her attention to the compliments of some obstreperous lady of bosom and voice.

Not until Jedra was some distance away, and Bianca was once more listening to things which didn't count, could either of them have fully realized the whole significance of this meeting of theirs.

Also in the spiritual as in the physical world, my beloved, are the empire-shaking messages sent in code. Always some little time must be taken to transcribe them, weigh their import, act upon them, get the scattered forces mobilized.

Serene and cordial, just sufficiently cold, yet with that blood-red mouth of hers smiling unholy longings into the hearts of all the men who looked at her, the third Mme. Hough was mentally swooning, her very soul outpouring itself in a delirious chant.

"Guido! Ever since that night have I stood alone with you in the moonlit garden. Do you remember? 'We are all alone! I am yours—yours! No one can see!' You called me your darling Bianca. You kissed me on the lips. I'm no longer a child. But I'm still in the garden. Once more we meet before you say adieu!"

And Jedra, very sensitive, very experienced, with the wireless apparatus of his own soul attuned to that of Bianca with a perfection occurring but once in each avatar of any man, was perfectly aware of all this. Only, he did not swoon; there was no delirium.

Brains and breeding were his.

Equivalents, these, of the shell of the tortoise.

Inside of this armour were all the quivering fibres, the hot blood, the plunging heart, the insatiable appetite. To carry the figure further to sea, under his laminated crust was that same craving which sends the tunny full speed through the oceans from Alaska to the spawning ground off Italy, there to die. To Jedra, Bianca was the perfect woman. It wasn't merely her present beauty which made her so. That offer she had made to him eight years ago had infused her with a quality no other woman possessed for him, or could ever possess.

And he knew—as well as Bianca herself knew it—that this offer was now being made again.

Once more they were on the verge of separation. They were, so to speak, at the door of the tomb. A few brief hours, then off into his own oblivion would he disappear, she into hers.

But Jedra recalled perfectly, now, every tiny detail of that other farewell meeting of theirs. Then he had said to her:

"You are only a child!"

Now he said to her:

"You're the wife of my host."

None the less, his intellect and his breeding, indurated though these were, useful though these had been in protecting him hitherto, were momentarily showing themselves insufficient.

"Bianca! Bianca!"

It was a call not vocal; unless you could say that his corpuscles and the tissues of his spirit were vocal; unless you accept the doctrine that a Word created the universe and could uncreate it. Just then, Bianca was the Logos of his individual universe.

Musing! Just musing, my beloved!

You see that stranger over there—how placidly he strolls! And yet he muses over the nameless sin, the sky-shaking accomplishment, the assault on the Seven Spheres.

Jedra was like that, as he delicately greeted his friends, as he admired the frescoes, commented on Hough's surprising knowledge of periods, drew comparisons between this house and others with which he was familiar—all of which comparisons were favorable to this one.

Presently he and Bianca met again, isolated, this time—as isolated as they had been on that first, long Italian afternoon, while the grand-aunt dozed, while the servants drank their wine and gossiped in the kitchens or tended the vineyards on the green and yellow slopes. Mrs. Grundy dozed. All these others here were but peasants who drank their wine and babbled of things of no importance, or perchance labored in the vineyards—financial and otherwise.

There were only two aristocrats in the walled garden. One was Jedra, the other that white and golden girl who had scaled the wall. She was thirteen again, he but a little older.

There rushed up to them out of the blue valley the exhilaration of their adolescence.

"My prayers are answered," she breathed. She was quite shameless, all of a quiver, spurred with the thought that every second gone was a second lost. "My prayers are answered, Guido! Yes, a glass of champagne; but don't be long!"

They were speaking the Italian of Tuscany, which further isolated them.

"You're beautiful, Donna Bianca," he answered, steadily, without change of countenance.

"You never gave me the opportunity, Guido, to thank you for the marvelous *cassone*. A marriage-coffer, indeed! Did you suspect, when you sent it—to my family, that I should some day bring it to America as a part of my trousseau?"

She was leading up to the subject of her marriage. It was in her mind

to tell him what he already knew—that, so far as she was concerned, it was a marriage without love.

Jedra's reason and breeding encased his passion.

"Ah, yes; the coffer!" he exclaimed. "The little souvenir, Donna Bianca, was, in truth, more fitting than I thought. Shall I tell you why?"

"Yes."

"It belonged to a beautiful bride of my family three—or was it four?—centuries ago. Her name also was Bianca. She sinned, poor thing; and her lord and master murdered her."

"Guido!"

"The truth! And then, quite sure of her fidelity thenceforth and loving her as he did, he lined the coffer with iron and lead and put her into it. A couple of centuries passed before they opened it. They say that the hair was like your own."

Bianca shuddered.

"Was that," she whispered, fascinated, "why you said that the souvenir was more fitting than you thought?"

The implied accusation that she was no better than that other Bianca pleased her. It was in line with every impulse just then firing her blood. Jedra was too much of a gentleman not to speak the word which a woman was panting to hear, especially when the word could injure no one else.

"Yes," he answered.

"In my heart, in my dreams," she responded. "But, ah, the *cassone* was otherwise fitting. Into it I also put the relics of a love I believed to be dead."

She told him about those poor little mementos she had placed in it, years ago—the bit of ilex, the spray of yew, the fragment from the statue of Hermes.

"And they are still there," she murmured, her Italian as soft as it had been that other night; "still there—with what else I put into the coffer along with them. Guido!—Guido, the first Donna Bianca's ghost was not the only one the coffer has contained. It will not be the last. You must come

up to look at it. I have it—in my own apartments."

"That," said Jedra, "would indeed give me a thrill. But I fear that should I attempt to go alone to the apartments of the beautiful Signora Hough the servants might talk—and others, even."

"At the back of the hall over there," she answered, not looking at him, but nodding and smiling to a friend, instead, "there is a small elevator—my own. You enter it. You press the button. When the car stops, open the door, wait for me where you find yourself."

Jedra took Bianca's empty glass, strolled away as other of her guests surrounded her.

### CHAPTER VIII

JEDRA stepped out of the little lift which Bianca had indicated. He found himself in a small hall, or alcove, as dimly lighted, as silent, as fragrant, and as intimate, as a corner of the unforgotten garden. Blue and gold and antique woods which were almost black made even the color-harmony almost the same.

That there was a trouble in his heart, who can doubt? A complex trouble, with contrasts as bold and harmonious as the blues and golds and blacks which shut him in, static in a silence as profound, enveloped in an atmosphere as luxurious.

There was his atavistic craving. There was his sense of right and wrong. There was Donna Bianca's offer—as unmistakable this time as once before.

Bianca was with him before he could have escaped, even if this had been his will—which it was probably not.

Men, my beloved, have two wills. There is the little will which says: "I'll not do this thing! I'll not do this thing! It is wrong. I'd be ashamed to have it known, even to myself, that I had fallen so low." But, all the time, the greater will is lying quiescent—the will of desire. Desire!—the only

material God used when He made the constellations—and that baby, over there; and you, and me!

Jedra may have about decided to make his visit to Bianca's apartments very brief and very formal. He wouldn't even touch her hand. He would look at the coffer. He would watch her as she opened it. He would murmur the conventional phrase.

A gold portière was pushed aside, and she stood there.

"Bianca!"

"My Guido!"

And, in the twinkling of an eye, the will of desire had swept them together as two butterflies might have been swept together in the grip of the sirocco.

Not for long.

Jedra's lesser will asserted itself. He was in a tumult, all right. But his brain and his habits—the combination called character—were asserting themselves.

"The world, Donna Bianca, into which you have come," he faltered, "is very beautiful. Not for anything would I—"

"But, oh, you love me!" Bianca whispered.

"Yes."

"And I love you, my Guido!"

Her voice broke slightly. It pre-saged an emotional eruption—a Vesuvius—an outflow of white-hot, devastating lava which any man of Jedra's intelligence would have sought to fore-stall in such circumstances as these.

"Where is the coffer, Bianca?" Jedra asked, as he turned away. "We must hurry."

Bianca did not say what was imme-diately in her mind. Indeed, over those tropic, uncovered possessions of hers she cast a veil of gaiety.

"This way," she murmured, lightly.

She preceded him through another silk-hung door. He followed her through a boudoir which might have belonged to one of the ladies of the Medici. They entered Bianca's bed-room.

For a moment there, they may have

been in the darkness. It was before Bianca herself turned on the light.

A symbol, *mon amie!*

"Ah, yes!" said Jedra. "There it is."

He had seen the coffer standing over against the wall. The room, apparently, had been designed especially to receive it. The room itself was in olive-wood, richly carved. Even the great fireplace of Carrara marble was sculptured to the same *motif* as that of the coffer—an early Gothic, somewhat churchly, yet into which had crept much of the mythology of the Greeks.

As always, when his mood was exalted, in Jedra himself there was a mingling of the heavenly and the profane.

Is it so with all men? Perhaps.

Through the lives of most of them, no doubt, there runs that perpetual conflict of Bacchus and St. Anthony, of Lucifer and those angels who never fell. In the Gothic mood, there still creeps in the touch of Venus, the call of Pan.

The room came as something of a revelation to Jedra. The meaning of it was clear. He was a god, and this was a temple dedicated to his worship. Heady stuff, this matter of worship! Nothing like it to develop the feet of clay! Only a question of time before the idol comes crashing down!

Jedra knew this. Time was precisely what was on his mind.

"We must hurry," he repeated, softly.

"I still have them there in the coffer—those relics of ours," Bianca whispered, as she turned to face him. "I'm the only one who has ever been able to open the coffer without danger to the woodwork. I'm still the only one. No one shall ever open it but me so long as I remain alive."

Her violet eyes were lakes of feeling into which Jedra plunged again and again and renewed his youth.

"Bianca, I am quite overcome. I must go, now, before—"

"There is no hurry," she whispered; and both her voice and her words must have recalled that time when she reminded him that they were all alone,

that there was no one there to see. "We have an hour, at least," she said. And this was the thought that was in her mind back there in the alcove when he had first mentioned that they would have to hurry. "All my servants are those who were with me in Siena. It's Maria, my old nurse, who guards the door. She'll let no one enter."

When Bianca said "no one," both she and Jedra were perfectly aware whom she meant.

There may have swept across Jedra's mental vision a moving-picture of the master of the house, the master of the house, the master of the day who stood in front of him.

"Bianca!"

The conversation which passes between two souls will never be written. A word is spoken, and as at the descent of a conductor's baton an invisible orchestra intones an unearthly harmony. A word is spoken, and a scorching flame comes blasting out of hell.

It may be inept, beloved, to repeat that Bianca was beautiful. The light in the room was soft. She was clad with the science that has been accumulating, more or less, ever since Rebekah put on bracelets and earrings. Her shoulders were bare. But the soft, alluring skin that covered them was scarcely softer and more revealing than the silks she wore. She was a vision of eyes. She was the dream of a red mouth. She was an obsession of essential woman.

"Do you want to see?" she asked, with one of those odd aberrations common to moments of emotional intensity.

"Yes," he said.

She caught his hand in hers, led him toward the coffer. They were like two children. Men and women always are children in times like that. And almost always, beloved, the girl takes the boy by the hand, leads him where she will.

## CHAPTER IX

HOUGH was alone. A man is always alone at the great moment—

when he becomes a demon, when he becomes a seer. There in the crowd he himself had assembled, with his special trains and special inducements, he was as alone as a hermit under a rock. The lights blazed, and the music pulsed, and those who weren't dancing drank and chattered and laughed. About four hundred guests, in all, helping to saturate the stones of the great house, each one of which had been brought from Italy, with a baptism of mirth.

Hough was married.

His third wife was beautiful.

He had bade them here to help him celebrate.

But Hough, for all that, was alone. He had seen it when Jedra went to the back of the hall where the little private elevator leading to Mrs. Hough's apartment was installed. He had seen it when Bianca had excused herself from those nearest her and drifted away—with a touch of migraine.

He strolled from group to group with the deportment of a king. Many a king must have strolled about with the deportment of a Hough, for that matter, since the world began, with the same sort of a fox gnawing at his heart under the royal robes. Hough laughed. He told his familiar jests. He was rather more indulgent than usual with the wit of others. He was always gallant with respect to the ladies—had always exercised over them a sort of fascination, due almost as much to his big ugliness, perhaps, as to his wealth; due most of all, if the truth be known, to his unerring appreciation of all which is physically beautiful.

Women always have loved that quality in men.

There was a detail of the third floor of the house, where Bianca's apartments were, which, as yet, was unknown to her. Hough himself had designed it—had taken a pencil from the architect and then, with his own powerful but delicate fingers, had drawn a line—like Peter the Great, tracing the line of the future railroad from Mos-

cow to the new capital on the Neva.

This also was a railroad from one capital to another.

The line which Hough traced became a secret corridor leading from his own apartments to those of his wife. He had never told her about the existence of this secret corridor. He hadn't dared to, as yet. Besides, who could tell what revolts lay ahead, what needs for strategic attack? From an old English-oak panel in his own bedroom this corridor ran straight to an olivewood panel in her own.

"Concerning some things," said Hough, bluntly, after having indicated where the corridor should be, "I object to publicity. I'm not the King of Spain."

He referred to the familiar custom of the Royal house—halberdiers and torch-bearers preceding his majesty when bent on a visit to his lady-queen.

Who knows but that there were certain wags who prodded each other, whispered the witty quip concerning domestic love, and about the honeymoon not being over yet—there are such wags—when they discovered that both host and hostess were absent? It put an extra sting into the mirth of the night, kept it from becoming flat. It was a diverting thing to whisper to certain ladies, as well.

"Are you sure?"

"Hough's the lucky devil!"

"And she—to have a husband so—impetuous!"

Many a man has been chuckled over, and felicitated, all the time that he was suffering the tortures of the damned.

Hough, alone, had made his way finally to his own quarters. What he was going to do after he got there he couldn't possibly have known. As well ask a man what he is going to do when tossed at sea in a small open boat, without a sail, without an oar!

He had stripped from himself the last rag of his motley and pretense by the time that he closed the door of his bedroom back of him. He was surging. There was about him the same awfulness and solitude as if he had

been alone at sea in the little open boat. He could conceive the rolling waves, foresee the impending destruction, but not the actions and reactions of his own spirit.

He collapsed somewhat, in spite of his strength, and stood there for a minute or two, with his hands clutching at the oaken walls. The force of his spirit—which was like the force of a mighty and invisible stranger to him—took him by the shoulders and shoved him over toward a dressing-table in a corner of the room. The same force directed his arm as he pulled open a drawer and brought out a revolver.

It would have been odd to see Hough looking down at this weapon, exactly as if he didn't know what it was, nor what he was going to do with it, nor why he had been permitted birth, and life, and *this*.

With the revolver in his hand, there was only one thing that he could do; and he did it. He groped around until he found the panel which concealed the secret passage. He remembered now. When he planned this corridor there had glowed in his brain such a coal of passion that his whole body burned. And was not the same thing transpiring now? His love for Bianca was a melancholy; it was a distress; it was a nobility; it was a smothered fire.

He entered the secret corridor, closed the panel.

This corridor was typical of something in Hough's character. More than all the rest of the house it bespoke his romance, his ruthlessness, his greed, but always with beauty as their inspiration.

An ordinary man, had he conceived and caused to be executed this corridor at all, would have left it ugly. Just its secrecy and *raison d'être* would have been enough—like some dark and ugly corridor in his brain.

But Hough had transformed this secret passage into a palace of beauty. It was savorously lighted. The two sides of it were panelled from end to end with Sixteenth Century paintings from a certain church representing

scenes from the lives of the martyred saints.

Hough traveled the corridor slowly. He looked at these treasures with owlish eyes, as if surprised to see them there, and yet as if he were telling them good-bye. There was the martyrdom of the young and beautiful St. Agnes. There was the martyrdom of the equally young and beautiful Sebastian. Sainted! Wasn't suffering enough to make a saint out of any man? Perhaps! In the long run! Especially if there was no other reward in view.

Hough must have felt the flames of St. Agnes, the arrows of St. Sebastian as he followed this, his own road of the Cross.

For, all the time that he was making this slow progress of his he was aware of what—just what? Were his intuitions wrong? Had the beautiful Jedra hastened back to the festival rooms before committing the unpardonable crime? Had Bianca thought better of that purpose which Hough had seen flame in her eyes, changed that purpose before it was too late?

He came to the other end of the corridor. Stifled, he listened at the olivewood panel. We're all criminals. So was Hough. And Hough was listening for the voice of his Judge.

## CHAPTER X

"SOUVENIRS, Guido; but I needed no souvenirs save those in my heart!—my dreams!—my prayers!"

"No woman does; nor man!"

"My heart also I've kept locked up, closed to all but you."

"And now—you have opened it, my lovely Bianca."

"This branch of ilex—you broke it off when it brushed your hair; the spray of yew—do you remember when you put it in my breast? This piece of marble—you rolled it between your hands all the time you were telling me who Hermes was."

"I wish I were a marble god, Bianca."

"Keep your hand where it is, my sweet Guido. Ah, even if you were a marble god—and you're beautiful enough to be one!—I'd come to worship you, I'd be your vestal, I'd keep the flame alight until by a miracle I were marble too, or you came to life. How wonderfully fine and soft your hand is!"

"It would be a miracle, indeed, my Bianca, to change you to marble. See how you are tempting me! Oh, Bianca, why did God ever permit a woman to have eyes like yours, and a skin like yours, and—and a nature?"

"To tempt you, Guido; a privilege I've craved!"

"To send me to hell, perhaps!"

"Gladly, if I could go with you! Your other hand!"

"I thought I heard a step."

"Foolish boy!"

"Bianca! Bianca! I shall go out of this house fit only for suicide—if I—if I—"

"Guido, my heart, I've thought of death. If I could only know that death would be a dream of you, as I have dreamed of you, as I shall continue to dream of you! It was the thought that even my dreams might be taken from me that has kept me alive."

"Poor and wonderful Bianca!"

"Has that other woman lips like mine?"

"No! There are no other lips like yours."

"Her hair?"

"Dark."

"And you swear that you do not love her?"

"I swear it, Bianca. Esteem! Respect! A certain sympathy!"

"How I loathe such words!"

"And the man who uses them?"

"They're words for a husband, not for a lover."

"And a lover and husband are never the same, my Bianca?"

"See how you make me shudder, Guido. Tighter! Tighter! Ah, strangle me, if you care to. Swear to me that

you'll never love her—that I'm the only one you'll ever love."

"Guido!"

"My darling Bianca!"

"Why do you start, and move, and bring us back from heaven to earth, my Guido?"

"I tell you, Bianca, that unless I leave you now—"

"Your voice has changed."

"My—my soul has changed. I'm a brute, a carrion!"

"Sweetheart!"

"I came here as a guest. I've taken advantage of my host. I do not blame you, dear Bianca. It is only myself I blame. No, no! I can't regret it that I kissed you. But, for your sake, and mine, Bianca, I'd better go, before—before—"

"Oh, not before! It's I who ask you. I tell you that we are safe. There are so many guests that you'll never be missed. They'll think you've gone. As for me—what is half an hour? And we've been gone barely five minutes."

"But your husband!"

"Bah!"

"My host!"

"Guido! You're mocking me! You're mocking yourself!"

"How do you mean?"

"You're talking like a grocer's clerk. . . . You didn't know that I was so strong; did you? Strong! Strong like a she-wolf with you for my little Romulus, my emerald! There, like that until I've finished! . . . Husband! Host! You make me laugh! Do you suppose that he ever believed he could buy all that I had? Do you suppose that he would ever have invited you here had he known that you were the one I loved? You owe him nothing. Neither do I."

"You married him, Bianca."

"My fabric—my color—were what married him, and what he married. He acquired them as he would have acquired a picture. All of these people who are rioting down-stairs—they were brought here to admire me. So were you. Admire me, Guido! Enjoy me, Guido! Do you think that

you'll spoil the picture? Do you think that I'll be any less beautiful to him, or less valuable, for having belonged to someone else? Kiss me! There isn't a modern picture in his gallery, Guido; not one that wasn't owned by others before him. Listen! Do you remember that night in the garden? It was you I married then."

"There's a peril in the way you talk, Bianca. There's hell itself in the way that you talk, Bianca. I know. I've lived so much. Ah, Lord!—Don't Don't, Bianca! You know that you're driving me mad. I did dream about you. I did desire you. This is a dream. This is desire. But, Bianca, a man who thinks only of—Bianca, I can't think—with your lips to mine."

"I'd love to torture you, Guido. When you're troubled, you're more beautiful than ever."

"There, I shall not let you forget—"

"What is there to forget except that you and I are one?"

"God pity me! God give me strength!"

"Forget, you mean, the man who thought he could buy me?"

"Yes."

"I hate him."

"Bianca—"

"I hate him more than ever, now that I've looked into your eyes again, felt your dear arms pressing me close again—your lips on mine. I'll tell him so, some day, my Guido. I'll say to him: I can't love you because your face is red instead of being the color of old ivory, like Guido's; because your eyes are little and hard, not large and soft, like Guido's; because, when you try to kiss me my soul sickens, for you are not suave and pleasant and blood-stirring like my Guido! Don't move! What was that sound? *Maria, is that you?* Yet, it couldn't have been Maria. I told her to remain outside. She never—"

"Perhaps it is—"

There was a complex movement in the dimly lighted room, of three shapes, not two. Three vivid facts, like

splashes of color, were there—a cry, a jet of flame, a crashing shot.

## CHAPTER XI

It was Bianca who uttered the cry, but it was Jedra who was struck. The bullet struck him in the breast, sent him staggering slowly backward, more as if from surprise than anything else. He came up against the painted post of Bianca's canopied bed—a bed that a Pope of Rome had slept in centuries ago. He stood there, gasping, with no great change of expression. The melancholy in his face may have been a bit more accentuated, his smile more strained. That was all.

Bianca herself was shrinking and quivering there like a ghost surprised by an unexpected inrush of daylight.

The third shape was Hough, of course.

Hough had plunged into the room as if he had been thrown there. The first impulse having spent itself, Hough also came to a stop. The human machine is often like a cartridge. It explodes. A reek, an impotency, are all that remain of what, a moment before, was such splendid power. But, unlike the cartridge, the human machine recharges itself—slowly, most often.

Hough's first action, after the explosion, was to go over to the door of the room communicating with the rest of the house. There was no danger of the shot having been heard. He knew it. He was just fumbling about, his brain not having had time as yet to assert itself.

But Bianca's first movement had been to rush toward Jedra. She sobbed something inarticulate.

He said:

"I am dying, Bianca."

Hough returned. Hough was beginning to shake.

"You cur," Bianca panted; "you coward!" She added a few epithets—in Italian, chiefly, words untranslatable.

The purport of her remarks was that Hough, though less than the dust, had succeeded in destroying the noblest

work of God. The odd effect of this was that Hough disregarded the insults of his wife, began to grapple with the real problem which her words propounded. He spoke to Jedra.

"Are you badly hurt?"

Jedra nodded. Jedra's color was slightly changed. He had slipped down a little lower, but not much! was still propping himself up against the painted bed. It seemed incredible, even then, that he had been mortally wounded.

Bianca and Hough together made some concerted move to get Jedra to lie down on the bed; but Jedra clung to his present position—like a stricken horse, which refuses to lie down as long as it can stand, knowing that if it yields it will never stand again. Yet Jedra made no move to prevent them as Bianca and Hough opened his shirt. There was a black hole in the bosom of the shirt. The skin of his breast was almost as white. In it there was a wound almost as bloodless.

Jedra himself diagnosed the situation.

"Bleeding internally!"

"Get a doctor," sobbed Bianca, without tears.

Hough had a shambling movement of obedience, but Jedra stopped him. Jedra must have known that he was a dead man. He was making a tremendous effort of the will to keep his light going still a little while. He was trying to do this decently, too, without scandal, without heroics.

"It is nothing," he whispered. "I am dying, but it was all arranged for. I knew that it was going to happen."

Bianca began to go incoherent again. She began to cry like a little girl. She began to say that she hadn't done anything wrong and that she really didn't see why all this sorrow and trouble should have been cast upon her.

All the time that she was saying this—it only required a dozen seconds or so—Jedra looked at her from his glazing eyes. Who knows? Perhaps he was thinking that there were worse fates in the world than this death by

violence in a strange house, in a strange country, in the flower of his youth. One of the worse fates would have been his marriage to Donna Bianca.

The dying think quickly, have large powers of clairvoyance.

Then, somehow, Bianca was out of the scene altogether. She had crumpled up on the floor, most likely, there as Jedra's feet—trying to sob, trying not to sob, trying to think, trying not to think. In any case, there were Jedra and Hough face to face.

Two men!

They recognized each other as such.

There must have been a feeling of brotherly love between them. Just that!—now that the woman was out of it.

"I am sorry," Jedra managed to say. "I—a-pol-o-gize."

"My God," blurted Hough; "if I had only shot myself, instead; or this slut who has ruined us! Perhaps it would be better for us all if I do so now."

He was asking advice. That was what he was doing. He had tossed the revolver on the embroidered satin counterpane—the same that the long-dead Pope had used. There was the beginning of a gesture about him which indicated that he would have taken the weapon, too, and done the thing he intimated had the dying Jedra given him the slightest encouragement to do so.

But Jedra stayed Hough with a look. Hough, instead, caught Jedra in his arms and eased him to the floor, where Jedra lay with Bianca crouching and twitching at his side. But Jedra remained pillowed in Hough's arms, seemed to be perfectly comfortable there.

Jedra thanked Hough.

"There must be nothing said about this," said Jedra. "It isn't worth while."

"But what shall I do?" Hough asked.

"Do what my ancestor did," said Jedra. "The coffer is over there—open—open and ready. No one will ever know."

After that, Jedra had nothing more to say to them. He seemed to be perfectly at home in their society, however. He talked pleasantly, though faintly, of distant friends and scenes. At first, he spoke only in English, as if out of consideration for his host, whose knowledge of Italian was limited. But presently he was back in his native Italian.

It was then that Bianca held her breath and listened.

But Jedra had apparently forgotten about Bianca. It was of another girl he spoke. It must have been, for he alluded to the soft blackness of her hair. A spell of pain and hatred seemed to be creeping over Bianca as she listened to this. It was only when Jedra referred to the last time that he had seen this maiden that Bianca relaxed. That time the girl's hair had shone black and cloudlike by the light of candles, for she was lying dead on a bed of state.

The only part of all this which Hough could understand was a little Italian prayer, primitive and infantile, which he himself had learned by heart from its being encrossed on a certain stained glass window he greatly loved.

It must have touched Hough.

He kissed Jedra on the forehead, as a priest might have done, and murmured those words in the Vulgate Latin which meant that Jedra's sins were remitted—if there were any sins.

Thus absolved, Jedra died.

And then—

"You, woman," said Hough, to Bianca, "lend me a hand. This is no time for your feminine nonsense. Afterward, I may give you a beating; or, again, I may give you the second bullet in that gun. But, in the meantime, stifle your nonsense and lend a hand. I don't blame you for having loved this boy, but I'm your master, now that he is gone. I'm going to see that that last suggestion of his shall be carried out. There'll be no scandal. No one need know about this—but you, and me, and him!"

"Would you—" Bianca began, seated there on her heels.

"Yes!"

"Oh, John," said Bianca, staring up at him.

And into Bianca's eyes there came the same sort of a light which had been there when she saw Count Jedra approaching her through the reception room. Hough recognized the look, and, although he gave no immediate sign of having recognized it, the knowledge which it brought him must have steadied him for the holy but somewhat gruesome work which he had to do.

Moreover, he knew there was no occasion for either the beating or the shot he had half promised his wife.

As a matter of fact, when they returned to their guests, less than half an hour later, everyone remarked the new tremulousness with which the third Mme. Hough clung to her lord and master's arm, how she flashed up at him those gorgeous, violet-shaded eyes of hers. And Hough himself seemed tender and deeply moved.

Oh, a most loving couple!—that describes them.

## CHAPTER XII

You will remember, my beloved, how, immediately following that great housewarming of theirs, Mr. and Mrs. Hough went to Florida, thence to Havana, thence to Hough's palace in Pinehurst. You'll remember how everyone said that the big house and the reception which opened it had been well worth while.

Ah, yes!

Once more John Hough had known what he was about.

For it had been more or less of an open secret before, that the beautiful Donna Bianca did not love her husband at all. Who, anyway, had ever heard of a beautiful woman loving her husband? The thing, *mon amie*, is quite impossible. Yet Hough had accomplished the impossible. No wonder that the good people commented on it! Bi-

anca loved her John. Oh, she was simply crazy about him. She still is, to this day.

And all since the night of the great reception.

The *cassone*?—the beautiful marriage coffer?

They say that Donna Bianca kept it in her bedroom, right where it was, for almost a year—slept, for all I know—and I'm not supposed to know—with it there; slept in the painted old bed where the Pope had died, and where poor Jedra clung when he was mortally wounded.

Beautiful women do queer things, at times, in quest of a thrill—especially when they have been born and brought up in one of those haunted old *palazzi* of Mediæval Italy.

You can see the bed for yourself, if you care to, in that same part of the Museum basement where the coffer is.

It was Hough's idea.

Often, my beloved, when you see extensive alterations being carried out in some great house for no apparent

reason, be assured that a ghost is being laid.

Donna Bianca's bedroom was done over.

Even the olivewood paneling and the Carrara fireplace were sent over to the Museum. There were pieces in the papers about them—how generous Hough was.

A gift—but not precisely; not just yet!

The paneling, the bed, the fireplace, worth a small fortune in themselves, these were practically made over to the Museum in fee simple.

But not the olivewood coffer!

That was known as a "loan." There are many such in the Museum. Loans in perpetuity, they practically are. Virtually, they are gifts. The difference is that a loan is not to be tampered with by the authorities of the Museum.

The olivewood coffer is a thing of beauty. Like many another thing of beauty, my beloved, it contains a ghostly secret—will continue to contain it, most likely, until the Day of Judgment.



## IN MARCH

By Bliss Carman

WHEN the sun shines upon the crust in March  
 In the bare woods and all the trees are gray,  
 How blue the shadows lie along the snow,  
 Tracing their patterns by the drifted wall!  
 And where the muffled stream runs, bluer still,  
 Between its snowy banks with tinkling ice,  
 The blue-gray oaks and sugar-maples stand,  
 Like a faint landscape etched on antique plate.  
 The strong sun melts the snow along the eaves;  
 A calling crow flies over, trailing North  
 His silent shadow down the wooded slope;  
 And there, to give the picture its fine note  
 With the intenser azure of the sky,  
 A bluebird lights upon the apple bough.



# THE SINS OF THE FOUR HUNDRED\*

By —————

## II

### THE DÉBUTANTE

I FIND that I derive an immense satisfaction from jotting down now and then my ideas of Society as it has presented itself in various phases to me during the last ten years. I get, as it were, a secondary thrill from the process and feel once more in touch with life as it is lived on the big scale of the New York millionaire.

I was just of age when I was hurtled into the smart set. Naturally, for a year or more I was identified up to a certain point with the débutante coterie. It is of the débutante I wish to write now.

The first formal coming-out party I attended was that of Milly Vale. Milly was a sweet, lissome creature with whom I had exchanged a few banalities now and then. She had innocent blue eyes, and pale golden hair—you know the type, of course. Colford Vale, her father, had seen to it that Milly had led a carefully protected, perfectly chaperoned existence. I found out afterwards just how much that sort of thing stood for, but I didn't know then.

Colford Vale was advertised as a fine fellow and most worthy host, in that at big affairs he always got roaring drunk himself and saw to it that his guests all followed suit. Milly's coming-out party proved a frightful orgy that lasted all night. The chaos and excess of it sank towards morning to nothing short of the commonest barroom ribal-

dry. Fifty of us rounded up for breakfast in various stages of drunkenness and idiocy, and Mr. Vale apparently thought none the worse of us as he tumbled us into his various motors and sent us home. The papers that day blazoned many pictures of Milly and accounts of her charming party.

That is the way many, many a débutante makes her bow to Society. Her carefully nurtured body is put up for sale at a drunken bout; the bacchanals insolently look her over, pass judgment and then bid. She is usually married within a year.

I am giving you my first impressions of the débutante. I found, however, after a couple of years that there was a much nicer balance and finer adjustment of things than I had realized. For the protected existence of the society girl is all a myth, and her general upbringing and education are but a careful leading up to the life that is opened up to her at her coming-out party.

The children of Society receive little attention from their parents. They are delivered over to nurses, more or less competent, from the time they are a few weeks old. In most of the New York residences the children and nurses have a floor to themselves, and in the summer resorts they are usually consigned to separate cottages. I know of one apartment house in Bar Harbour that caters exclusively to the children of the rich. People hire cottages for themselves or visit extensively in the colony and the children are sent to the hotel. There they receive formal visits from

\* The third article in this series will appear in the next number of THE SMART SET.

their parents every other day, perhaps weekly in the season's rush.

I know of two young married couples who hired two cottages in Newport. The older people lived in the one, the children were consigned to the other.

The nurses and governesses are usually French and German. As the children learn to speak the language of their nurses, so they begin to think their thoughts and absorb their ideas. What those thoughts and ideas are, everyone who has had to deal with the fashionable servant knows only too well. Bring together the flotsam and jetsam of nearly every race,—French, German, English, Italian, Japanese, etc.,—under the abnormal conditions that are likely to exist in a wealthy household and the result is an unwholesome one. Given a taste of luxury, these people lose their virility, become superficial, and develop a most unhealthy attitude toward everything in general, sex in particular. Of sex they make a fetish and give themselves up body and soul to illicit relationships.

Small wonder, then, their young charges should get the idea of sex long before, according to the laws of nature, they really should. The child of five soon learns to tease its nurse, discovered in the embrace of the butler, and listens with an awakening intelligence to all the gossip of belowstairs. Nurses themselves often wilfully arouse the curiosities of their young charges and get a certain unhealthy excitation in watching the process of sexual awakening in the childish mind. Then, as the child grows older, it is made the confidant of many an amour of ugly detail and grows to relish the aiding and abetting of such as an adventure.

The boys in some way or other manage to throw off the thrall of the domestic at an earlier age than the girls and so suffer less harm. Possibly, because with preparatory school and college ahead of them, they are obliged to cover a certain amount of ground that can be accomplished only with the aid of good substantial tutors, who coun-

teract some of the earlier influences. But in the case of the girls, moral stamina is very often sacrificed on the altar of a good French accent. What matters Mademoiselle's morals, provided only she is a Parisienne and can bring about the desired fluency of French in her young pupil?

The young girl of society becomes a past master of intrigue long before she goes into long dresses. She acquires an ease in lying, an acuteness of perception in regard to her own interests that has in it something almost uncanny. I saw a child of eight bickering with another child of about the same age for a fifty-cent piece.

"You give me the money, and I'll let you charge six ice-cream sodas to father at Huyler's. That means you make ten cents."

So the bargain went. That is indicative of the sort of thing that goes on constantly on a larger scale among the older children, where pocket money is sometimes limited.

Children constantly blackmail each other—"You pay me twenty-five cents or else buy me some caramels or I'll tell such and such a thing." They are amazingly shrewd in their calculations of ways and means of achieving their ends, and they are cool-blooded in the extreme in putting their schemes into execution. Two youngsters of perhaps ten and twelve were known to exploit a "climber" once to the extent of borrowing a quarter.

"She's trying to get in, you know," they explained to an envious playmate. "She's easy money."

They begin to gossip from the cradle. Clusters of children may be heard discussing the latest scandals.

"Did you know that Marston's mother is going to get a divorce?" or "What time did your mother and father roll in after the party at the Golf Club last night?" or "My father made a thousand dollars in the tennis match yesterday," and so on.

Morality and the distinction between right and wrong become slurred over very quickly. To be able to get away

with a thing stamps you as of the right sort.

There is an increasing tendency on the part of young people to scoff at everything. Respect is a thing unknown. Of course they are duly polite when in the presence of their elders, but their politeness is entirely of the surface. Ridicule your elders and all established custom, upset tradition, mock at God and the Church, and you'll get by as a leader in the eyes of the young generation.

Loud mirth on the part of a group of children once, when investigated, proved to be due to the discovery of a youth of ten in their midst who still said his prayers. They are tremendously brutal to each other, these youngsters, and are quite merciless in pouncing upon each other's weak points and probing deep. This is evident in the nicknames which flash constantly about and in the continual jollying of the weak who are unable to hold their own.

I am constantly reminded when seeing several of these young people taking their fun at the expense of one poor sufferer of a crate of ducks I saw once. At least twenty-five hale and hearty specimens were plucking viciously at a weakling and ended by entirely demolishing him. The survival of the fittest, a doctrine carried out most mercilessly in juvenile Society!

But, after all, they are more or less frank and open in their intriguing and brutal treatment of each other. It is in the whispered exchange of confidence and unhealthy speculation as to sex things that the real evil lies. Instead of a direct facing of vital issues there is a badgering of the subject that cannot help but bring about harmful results.

At an early age the girl is prone to develop so-called "crushes" either upon other girls or boys of her own set or upon someone in an entirely different walk of life. Girls are allowed more latitude in summer at seaside or mountain resorts, and it is there that affairs of this sort flourish most successfully.

I know one girl of thirteen, heiress to goodly millions, who developed a ludicrous crush upon a burly policeman who happened to have the beat that included the fashionable club of the place. There was nothing wrong in the affair; it simply showed the peculiar slant of the child's mind. Her duenna must have been particularly slack not to have seen the drift of things, or else there is a bare possibility she divided the spoils with the worthy officer. And there were spoils that made a pretty fair total by the close of the season. A clerk in one of the jewelry stores of the place showed me an exquisite cigarette case marked with the man's initials.

"She's been getting things here all summer for him," he said.

"But are the children allowed unlimited credit everywhere?" I asked.

He shrugged. "It's a chance one way or the other. Sometimes the parents kick when we hold the youngsters up on a purchase. Sometimes they make a row if we give them full rein. But for the most part, they write their checks and ignore the items. So in the end it pays us to let the children have their own way."

His attitude was no doubt that of every small shopkeeper of the resort. The girls are given their heads in running up accounts and the chauffeurs and various riding-masters who are brought in contact with them at their susceptible age are the gainers thereby.

Most of the girls get their rudiments of sex knowledge from someone distinctly not of their own set. I remember seeing a riding-master, a Frenchman of the commonest sort, give his young pupil, a girl possibly of fourteen, a resounding slap on the back. There was a familiarity in his attitude quite unbearable, but the girl seemed not to resent it in the least. Evidently such rough intimacies were a matter of course. Fifty feet back rode the footman assigned the task of protecting his young mistress.

And yet again, I have seen many a girl lurking in out of the way corners of a club to exchange words with a

marker, who, in teaching her tennis, has managed to arouse in her other interests.

The chauffeur, too, comes in for a large share of attention. Usually young, with a certain amount of reckless daring in his make-up, he cannot be classed as a servant. The girl learns to run her own car when she is about fourteen or fifteen, and many opportunities are discovered for an exchange of intimacies in the demonstrating process. What does the governess, alouge in the back seat, know of what is happening up there in front? And how many little stolen interviews are arranged within earshot of a woman whose sole duty is to be on the alert to prevent such things?

## II

THE young girl of society very soon develops an avidity for the yellow-backed French novel that quite absorbs her. The unwholesome bombast and mawkish sentimentality of such books naturally affect the trend of thought of the reader, particularly the young reader, and make the mind that absorbs them evil and unclean. But where do the girls get the books? Perfectly simple. For the most part in their own libraries. But in cases where parents are quite awake to their duties and attempt to keep the minds of their daughters free from this yellow taint, the servant can always be bribed.

The head of a fashionable boarding school in New York told me of an interesting incident.

A well-known New York millionaire brought his daughter to the school.

"I don't care what you teach her," he said with decision, "but keep her away from French novels."

"She won't get any French novels here," answered the principal with a certain indignation.

"You don't know her," said the father. "She'll bribe the teachers, the servants, the postman—she'd bribe God Almighty himself if she could get at Him for a yellow cover!"

The girl stayed at the school for a month under most thorough surveillance, but at the end of that time the principal sent her home, acknowledging frankly her defeat. The yellow covers were discovered under the mattress, behind pictures, everywhere. They sprouted like mushrooms, and in the end the principal, clever woman of the world that she was, had to give up trying to trace them to their source. The only way to keep the insidious evil from spreading among the other pupils was to send the girl home.

So, thoroughly corrupted in mind by her extensive reading, the girl looks about her for some means of getting a little excitement out of her actual everyday existence. She has begun to find the romps with her friends a little tame, the chance flirtations provocative of a desire for something more dramatic. The moral status of the women she is brought in contact with daily—her governess or maid or masseuse—usually determine the solution of the problem at this crisis.

Of course the girls of Society smoke. I am a free thinker myself and see no reason in the world why a woman shouldn't smoke as well as a man, but to see girls of twelve inhaling a specially selected brand of cigarette makes me shudder for the health of our next generation. The whole thing is deplorable, not from a moral but from an economic view-point.

Drinking is accepted as a matter of course, and why shouldn't it be? There is usually a free use of wine of every sort at home and at the clubs. A child soon realizes why mother or father sleeps late after a big ball. To strike Papa for money at a time when he is rendered more generous than usual by an excessive use of alcohol is an art early acquired by these young people. Garrulity on the part of an elder is immediately set down to its proper source and is apt to be mercilessly exploited.

I remember seeing at a beach once a group of girls and boys clustered about an elderly woman of perhaps 60, who was quite obviously the worse for

liquor. The general hilarity and shrieks of laughter argued that the young people considered the whole performance a great lark. I saw a girl assisting a very beautifully gowned woman into a horse-show box once. A wink exchanged between the girl and a youth in the next box indicated a thorough understanding of the woman's rather unsteady carriage. The woman was the mother of the girl.

So the children take to the use of alcohol very early. Seltzer lemonades in the open soon develop into claret lemonades in a sequestered spot, and they in turn easily merge into something stronger. There are instances of delirium tremens among boys of seventeen and occasionally girls not yet out in Society become addicted to the use of strong liquors.

So with drugs. There is an indiscriminate use of them among the older people that is bound eventually to creep into the younger sphere. Girls in their teens often know all the ways and means of securing the most powerful drugs. These they resort to at first in time of illness, but eventually use freely for the pleasure of the thing.

The young people of Society accept very readily and as a matter of course the amours of their parents. Often a woman will have living in her own household some man with whom she is quite obviously having an *affaire*. The children must come sooner or later to an understanding of the relation. Or a man, the father of a growing family, flaunts quite shamelessly a double *ménage*. The scurrilous magazines and newspapers, that the young people read with avidity, will make matters of this sort perfectly clear if comprehension fails otherwise.

There are no doubt in Society hundreds of examples where girls suffer deeply from the knowledge of their parents' weaknesses. But in the end they become callous and accept such things as inevitable.

A woman of Society, notorious in this country and abroad for the scandals in which she had been involved,

was heard to remark that she was obliged to send Marie, her second daughter, to boarding school because the girl obviously disapproved her mother's indiscretions.

"My dear, she cries every time I take a highball."

"Continual tears you see," cut in the older daughter, and then mother and daughter laughed uproariously.

They were capital friends and understood each other perfectly. Marie, herself, is now married and one of the most talked of women in the younger set. Her fine sensibilities were blunted eventually and she promises to outdo even her mother in her lurid career.

Betting is another thing that gets into the blood at an early age. The wagers of candy and chocolate soon become good cash bets that increase in size in proportion to the raise in allowances. Polo matches, tennis, golf,—everything opens up a good field for betting and with the older people all about plunging recklessly, what can be expected but that the youngsters follow suit? The bridge tables are constantly in use at home, and discussions as to gain or loss occupy the conversation generally. In fact, the money that makes for the life of luxury led by these people is all made in the big gamble of the Stock Exchange. The children perhaps inherit that tendency to take a chance that is the dominating spirit of big finance.

There is one phase of the life of the rich that is, I think, responsible for a great deal of the corruptness and aberration of the young mind. That is, the undue emphasis put upon animals. There are few men of Society not interested in horses or dogs or polo ponies, and the breeding of fine specimens is becoming more and more an obsession with the man who has money. Breeding is now for the most part a pastime of the wealthy, and one that seems to absorb utterly the personality of the man entering into it. He lives and moves and has his being in his horses or dogs, as the case may be, and gradually all the people connected with him are drawn into his circle of influence.

Children learn the points of horses and dogs very readily and delight particularly in the shows where they always turn out in full force. At the horse shows they keep for the most part in their own boxes, although I have seen youngsters crowding in eagerly at the rail, displaying more interest in the loose talk of the professional horsemen clustered there than in the specimens of horseflesh in the ring. The professional horseman is apt to be of low order, not at all the sort to help in the training of a child's mind. And a great many children, whose fathers go in largely for horses, come into direct contact with such men. The girls in particular find a peculiar, unhealthy, excitation in entering into conversation with them.

But it is at the dog shows that most harm is done. I think the crowd that the average dog show draws is the most depraved and sordid crowd in the world. The races are exclusive by comparison. You get crowded and hustled together, men and women of the worst possible order. The girls and boys of Society usually enter their pets at the current Show, where they enter into a *bon camaraderie* with all the other exhibitors. How many a close conversation between some girl of thirteen or fourteen and a degenerate professional of loose appearance have I wanted to break into!

I listened to one such talk once. The girl belonged to one of New York's best families, but the loudness of her tones and her general boldness of bearing showed the kitchen strain somewhere. She was discussing the inbreeding of a Pekinese and was flaunting quite shamelessly her knowledge of the subject. The man to whom she was talking lounged insolently close to her and leered. It was disgusting; I shall never forget it. The girl afterwards eloped with a chauffeur. Of course, this is an exceptional case. But the atmosphere of these shows is abominable.

So, I have tried to prove to you that the transition from girlhood to the status of the débutante is not such a vio-

lent one as it would seem. The girl steps into her new life quite prepared to meet all its emergencies. Her sensibilities are duly blunted; she is a woman who knows. She takes the drunkenness and debauchery of her coming-out party as a matter of course. She responds in kind to the loose jest and ribald cheer of the men who have gathered there to look her over. She knows the full value of alcohol and tobacco. And although usually pure of body, she knows her *metier de femme* and makes the most of her knowledge.

It was so with Milly Vale—sweet, lissome Milly. I danced with her at her coming-out party and pressed her to me protectingly as the revelry grew louder and louder. I didn't know then, that it all seemed quite natural to her, and that she would have been far happier had my embrace proved less protective and more amorous. I became wiser afterwards.

I want to sketch briefly the career of a few of the débutantes I have known.

George Cabot, a man of remarkable integrity, married little Nina Bancroft, believing thoroughly in her artless mien and frank eyes. Within a year George discovered that a lover had come upon the scene. For a while George saw things red and we were afraid he would take desperate measures. But in the end he laid his wife's indiscretion at the door of untried innocence and forgave. There followed six years during which George tried to awaken in his wife some conception of the decencies of life. But she went from bad to worse, and took unto herself lovers indiscriminately. Then George, tired out with the weary strain of his efforts, shot himself at his Club, and Nina made a charming widow.

Ann Cushing was introduced to Society at seventeen. The summer before her coming-out party she had a violent *affaire* with a married man, a man well known for his amours. Her parents forced the coming-out to distract Ann's attention from her lover. In two months Ann had married a splendid

chap. She no doubt found the restraint of home life intolerable after her little fling and hoped in marriage to gain a little freedom. A year later she committed suicide, and her young husband has sunk to deplorable depths since.

And yet again we occasionally find a

girl who has illusions when she marries. Her husband's infidelity usually determines her conduct and she attempts to prove by reckless indiscretions her indifference to him. But I shall speak of the married people at another time.



## REFLECTION

By Marion L. Bloom

**H**E sat in her studio arguing heatedly. Contrary to alleged feminine habit she remained silent, smiling lovingly at the rich tones of his voice as he argued around and against the point in question, in bewildering confusion. A vague sympathy pervaded her as she listened to his thwarted attempts to touch the heart of the subject.

A dissemination of mental forces, she concluded, a decided lack of coordination!

Her tender smile encouraged him to continue and she watched as if fascinated his boyish trick of twisting and pulling his short thick fingers until the joints cracked. Her eyes followed the matronly figure as he paced the room in his awkwardly fitting suit, yet so wholly typical of him.

"What a beautiful, beautiful voice he has," she thought passionately, "and how I love him! But Heavens, how much I will find to hate about him when I have ceased to love him!"



**A**LITTLE falsehood is to a beautiful truth as a bit of tulle is to a chorus-girl's costume. It need hide nothing, yet the effect is much more artistic—and one looks more closely.



**T**HE years a woman subtracts from her age are not lost; they are added to the ages of other women.



**O**NE falls in love with a girl of eighteen, but after that one merely collaborates.



# I SHALL CELEBRATE TONIGHT

By Patrick Kearney

**I** SHALL celebrate tonight.

It is the happiest night of my life.

The fates have been kind to me, and I have no cause to complain of the universe. I shall celebrate. I shall get gloriously drunk.

My friends will have no cause to remark on my miserliness. Champagne will flow as it has never flowed before.

Even now my dining room is ready for the guests. Drinks of all sorts, golden drinks, violet drinks, green drinks, purple and amethyst drinks glint in their bottles on the buffet.

I am happy. I have achieved that for which I longed for many years. And I

will play the host on a large scale. What a celebration it is to be!

I have already prepared my toast of welcome. It will be like this: I shall stand at the head of the table, with a glass filled with bubbling, diamond-like champagne, and I shall say, just before draining my glass:

"Drink with me my friends, and be glad with me. Tonight is a momentous one for me. My happiness is complete. For today I was released from St. Elizabeth's Anti-Alcohol Institute, completely cured! Drink to my good fortune!"

I shall celebrate tonight. I shall get gloriously drunk.



## MAN TO MAN

By John McClure

**B**ETTER it were, my brother,  
You twain had never met,  
Then were no hearts broken  
And no dream to forget.

Now you must not remember,  
After you are gone,  
The mystic magic of her eyes  
At twilight nor at dawn.

Now you must not remember  
The songs her red lips sing  
Of love and lovers' ecstasy  
At dawn or evening.



# THE PIER GLASS

By Thyra Samter Winslow

ELLA first saw the pier glass in the window of a second-hand shop in Wabash Avenue, one of those odd shops that seem to pick up an unbelievable number of unrelated things.

In the window with the pier glass were a Japanese screen, slightly faded, an almost new kitchen chair, a golden-oak combination desk and bookcase that was in vogue in the eighties, a marble bust, horribly done, of a young boy with a sparrow on his finger, an imitation Turkish lamp and a shining black leather rocker.

It seemed almost indecent to gaze into a window of that sort, as if one were prying into the pitiful histories of little, unfortunate families. Where did the boy with the sparrow once live? Was he sold because the family was forced to get what they could for him, or because a young son or daughter, learning a smattering of art at school, decided the marble boy was no longer good enough? The kitchen chair—did it mean that a young couple—the chair was the kind that a young couple would buy and it had been well treated—had given up housekeeping after barely a start at it? And the Japanese screen? It had been beautiful one day. What had been hidden behind its greying gilt embroideries?

The pier glass was easily king of the window. It stood to one side, dignified, indifferent. It was a large pier glass and its frame was of grey enamel. It was arranged so that it could swing back and forth on standards of grey. And, on each side of it, all ready for electric wiring, were two electric candles, arranged at about the height

of a woman's head. Over the candles were little ornamental shades of rose-colored silk, finished with frivolous little chiffon roses.

Ella liked the pier glass as soon as she saw it. She liked it for many reasons. She liked it because it matched her new grey enameled bedroom set—double bed, chest of drawers, dressing-table-with-triple-mirror, two chairs—that so beautifully filled her bedroom. She liked the two little rose lamps. She liked all of it. She felt that she really needed a long mirror, because the mirrors in the dressing-table were tiny affairs, one could hardly see all of one's head in them, to say nothing of one's waistline or the bottom of one's skirt. Ella felt that it was still quite important that she see the hang of her skirt—for she had been married just a year and she had read so many things in newspapers about married women who "let themselves go." She wouldn't let herself go. And, if she had the pier glass . . .

Of course Ella didn't have much money. Jim didn't get a very big salary—yet, though of course he'd get a raise in a couple of months. He was getting along pretty well. Still, she had that money Uncle Fred and her mother had sent her for her birthday and a little she had saved out of the household fund. She might be able to get it without touching the money in the savings bank.

Ella went into the store to price the pier glass. She had never been in a second-hand store before—she had always regarded them as something rather low. But, of course, that pier glass made it different. The man who came

up to wait on her was dark-skinned, black-haired, with a thin, pointed beard. He reminded her of the villain she had seen in the movies two nights before. But he had quite a pleasant smile.

The pier glass in the window? Oh, yes, that was for sale. Twenty-five dollars was the price of it. It was a very fine glass. Would madam care to examine it more closely?

Ella looked at the mirror and the more she looked at it the more she wished that it belonged to her. The glass was so clear and lovely. When she glanced into it, she couldn't help smiling at her reflection. She wasn't conceited or anything like that—but, well, it was nice to be young and fluffy-haired and rosy-cheeked.

My, but she wished that she had the pier glass.

But twenty-five dollars! She couldn't afford that. Still, was it so big . . . ?

The salesman was speaking.

"But, if madam wants to take a chance on losing it, we shall have an auction next Tuesday morning at ten o'clock. It may, of course, be gone by that time. It is an exquisite glass. Still, if madam wishes to wait."

She wanted the glass right away, but she would have to wait, of course. Then, maybe, she could afford it . . .

Ella dreamed about the glass all week. The little bedroom had seemed perfect with its cretonne curtains and the grey furniture. Now it seemed dull and incomplete. With a big pier glass, a glass with two rose-shaded lights, then it would look splendid. How much she wanted it!

She told Jim about it one evening. Jim had been working hard all day and was tired. He was a little bit blue, too, because there had been some changes in the office and one of the other men had been given a chance to do some work that he wanted to do. Still, he sympathized with Ella. He couldn't afford to give her the pier glass, but he wanted her to be happy. He felt that for her to want the glass

showed how fond she was of the little home.

After all, when one has a wife who is young and pretty and who wants only to have a little nest that is dainty and complete . . . Jim had five dollars in his pocket that he was saving for a pair of shoes. But—he could wait until another pay day for the shoes—there would be a sale next month, most likely, anyhow.

So he gave Ella the crumpled five-dollar bill.

"Here, dear," he said, "you go there Tuesday and see what he'll let you have the looking glass for. You'd better go Monday, maybe, or before that, or early Tuesday morning. He may let you have it for a little less, before the auction. Twenty-five dollars is a pretty steep price for a looking-glass, isn't it?"

Ella agreed that it was, but she wanted it.

## II

ALTHOUGH it seemed years until Tuesday, Ella didn't go back to the store to see about the glass until that day. Tuesday morning she could hardly get breakfast. After Jim left, she hurried through the dishes, breaking one of the new blue saucers in her haste. She made the bed, but didn't take the time to do any sweeping or dusting.

She carefully counted her money, while she was dressing. She had twenty-seven dollars, now,—the five dollars from her Uncle Fred, the ten from her mother, five that Jim had given her and seven that she had saved from the grocery bills, the last few weeks. She could get the pier glass at the regular price, though, if there was a chance of getting it for less—

She pinned on her hat and caught an "L" train. Down town she hurried to the second-hand shop. What if the mirror was sold? But it was still in the window. Above it was a sign announcing the auction at ten.

It was nine o'clock.

Should she see the man as Jim had

suggested and ask again about buying it before the auction?

She had her hand on the door-knob, then hesitated.

After all, why not buy the mirror at auction? She had heard of wonderful bargains that had been bought that way. She spent the hour walking through the shops, looking at handmade lingerie, silk things, that she felt she could never afford. How she loved to finger them.

At ten Ella was back at the second-hand shop. It was the first time she had ever attended an auction and she felt pleasantly excited over it. The store held auctions regularly and the crowd waited stolidly. There was an old woman with a little black bonnet and a red and black shawl around her shoulders, a thin man wearing a brown derby, a fat, unhealthily greasy man with a long red nose, an old man who kept his hands in his pockets and sniffed continually, two brightly dressed women who talked constantly in harsh undertones and fingered everything, a big woman in black, others, indefinite.

Ella stood near the door as the auction began. A fat, black-clad man with keen eyes and bushy red eyebrows was the auctioneer. Ella enjoyed the way he forced people to bid, the way he made them eager about things they did not want. One of the talking women bought a bright-colored vase for three dollars. The little man with his hands in his pockets bought six dining room chairs and an old sofa. One after another, things were sold.

Then—the pier glass.

Ella pushed her hair away from her forehead, nervously adjusted her hat, opened her bag and felt of the little black leather purse containing her money. She'd get it, no matter what it cost. She wanted it more than anything she knew of.

"Here," said the auctioneer, "here I am offering this beautiful looking-glass, this wonderful looking-glass, with its beautiful frame. An elegant article, very stylish."

Ella hated his description of it. He talked on. Finally someone bid five dollars. As he had done previously, he laughed at the first offer. One of the talking women bid six, another woman, far back in the crowd, bid seven. No one else bid, then—seven and a half from a man near the auctioneer. Ella felt that he was someone with the company and had been told to bid that. She had noticed that going on. The woman far back in the crowd bid eight. The talking woman bid nine.

There was a pause.

The auctioneer consulted someone.

"Going," he said then, "if there is no other offer. Is there anyone else who wants this swell, big glass. If—"

Ella could hardly believe it. Purposely, she had held off, so as not to appear eager. Now—

"Ten," said Ella.

There were no other offers.

She had bought the pier glass for ten dollars!

She gave her address to the black-bearded salesman and paid him with two five dollar bills.

The pier glass was hers!

She hurried home.

She had been clever getting it for ten dollars. All day she thought of it. At half past four it was delivered. She paid the expressman a dollar. Even that only made it eleven. She could give Jim back his five dollars and still have some money over.

After the expressman had left, Ella moved the pier glass into the place she had planned for it and looked into it, posing a bit, like pictures of Mrs. Castle. Was it her imagination, or was she really getting prettier, more slender? She had been worrying a little lately about getting fat and had been reading the beauty column in an evening paper, looking for advice. She had even stopped eating potatoes and had planned to stop candy, too. But she saw, now, she wasn't fat at all. She hadn't looked into a real mirror for such a long time she had nearly forgotten how she did look, it seemed to her, now. If she only had some nice

clothes—she still had some money left. She looked into the mirror again. She really was pretty—and slender. She ought to have pretty clothes. That five dollars of Jim's. Why not? Hadn't he given it to her? Wasn't the mirror for his home, too? She'd tell him that it cost fifteen. Even that really would have been a bargain. That way, too, it wouldn't seem to him as if he were paying such a large part of it. If she told him ten, he'd wonder why she needed his five dollars—why he had to pay half, when she had some money of her own. She glanced back into the pier glass. Of course she needed that money for clothes—now that she saw what she really looked like. It would be foolish to give Jim back his five dollars.

She posed in front of the glass, arranging her hair, adjusting her skirt, until Jim came home. Dinner was late but he didn't mind. He was a patient sort. Jim liked the pier glass. It was a bit too grand for the apartment, perhaps, and fifteen dollars was a lot to pay for a looking-glass, but, if Ella liked it so much—Jim even agreed to send his friend, Phil Butler, the next day to see about running a wire from the main fixture in the center of the room to connect the two little electric lights. Phil was an electrician.

Phil came the next day and ran the wires to the rose-shaded lights on each side of the pier glass. After he had gone, Ella turned on the lights and looked again into the new mirror. It was a lovely glass. Gracious but she was pretty! Even her skin was prettier than she had supposed it to be. Oh, of course, the rose shades did throw a wonderful soft glow on her, but even then, if she were ugly, wouldn't that show, too? She admired her soft, light hair—it was a much prettier shade than she had thought it. Why had she been doing it up so carelessly and hurriedly? She took it down, now, and did it up slowly, brushing it until the waves shone under the rose lights. She made up her face, rouging her cheeks a little.

Usually, Ella stayed home in the

morning, unless there was something special, but now that she looked nice, and knew it, she wanted some place to go, something to do. She put on her coat suit, added a fresh collar to it and went down town.

She spent several hours looking at show windows, walking slowly up and down, watching other women. Then, she looked at hats. She needed a hat. Usually she paid about five or six dollars for her hats—simple little things. But the five-dollar hats looked too cheap to-day. She found two hats, one at seven dollars, trimmed with a black bow, the other—at twelve, black, smartly turned up on one side with an ornament of embroidered wools. It was pretty.

She looked at both of them. Then: "Send them both out on approval, please," she told the saleswoman. There was no use trying to decide quickly about an important thing like a hat.

She looked at the hats next day, trying them on before the pier glass. Had she ever even considered the seven dollar one? It looked shoddy, impossible. The other one, how the velvet shone, how well the colored wools blended! Twelve dollars was more than she had ever paid for a hat, but, why couldn't she have pretty things, once in a while? Lots of women paid more than that. Myrtle Morgan paid fifteen and twenty and twenty-five dollars all the time.

Myrtle Morgan—why, she had nearly forgotten her. She hadn't approved of Myrtle lately. She and Myrtle had known each other long before they both married. They had been good friends, then. They had married about the same time and to men in about the same circumstances. But Myrtle went to cafés in the afternoon, alone, or with another girl and met strange men and danced with them. It wasn't right, of course. Still, Myrtle did have a good time, while she had a stupid time, sitting home day after day. Myrtle's hats were always good looking. How she would laugh if she knew that Ella couldn't decide to keep a twelve-dollar hat.

Ella looked at herself in the tall mirror again, adjusted the hat at a smart angle, put on her coat, buttoned it high at the throat and stepped back to get the effect. The little side lights were turned on. Yes, it looked pretty good. After all, she was nice looking and she was only young, once, anyhow.

She kept the twelve-dollar hat.

### III

A WEEK later Ella met Myrtle downtown. When she saw Myrtle in a new suit of dull brown with a hat to match, touched with a bit of bright orange, she was glad that she looked rather nice herself. She had dressed carefully in front of the new pier glass. What if she had kept the cheaper hat? How Myrtle would have sneered at her!

"Hello, there, girlie," said Myrtle, "it's ages since I've seen you. What's the news?"

"There isn't any," said Ella, "there never is. I do the same things every day." She had never realized until the last few days how dull her life was getting to be.

"My, my, quite a little peeve on, little one. 'Smatter? Fight with friend husband?'"

"Not at all, only I just never do anything."

"Why don't you ring me up and go shopping with me?" Myrtle had detected a new friendliness in Ella. The last time they had met, Ella had been rather cool. Then, too, Myrtle noticed Ella's new hat.

"I, I was going to, honest. Why, I just thought of you the other day, when, when—"

"Well, when what?"

"Oh, just when I thought of you."

"Well, now that you've thought of me so much, what are you doing now?"

"Not a thing, why?"

"I've got a date with a fellow from St. Louis, a drummer. We are going up to the Stratford to dance a while. If you want to, you can come along. He'll

probably have a friend with him."

This was just the thing Ella had disapproved of—and yet—she remembered how pretty she had looked in the new mirror. Jim hadn't complimented her for a week. Why shouldn't she go?

"Sure, I'll go," she said.

The two walked to the Stratford, chatting about clothes.

Myrtle's "friend" was waiting for them. Yes, he knew another man, a Mr. Gorman, city salesman for men's shirts, saw him pass just a few minutes before. He was in the bar, he thought. He excused himself. In a minute he returned with Gorman. Myrtle introduced Ella as "Miss Pierce." Ella blushed, felt embarrassed and uncomfortable—but, after all, why not? She'd never see the man again.

They went into the café. The floor had been arranged for dancing—a square with small tables along the sides of it. Ella grew embarrassed again when she realized she didn't know any of the new dances. They ordered drinks. Ella took a ginger-ale highball because she knew how it tasted and she was afraid to try anything she didn't know. Myrtle and the St. Louis man danced away.

"Come on," said Gorman, "aren't you dancing?"

Ella hated to tell him she couldn't dance. It would show so many things—that she wasn't used to afternoon dances, that she was behind the times.

"I—I'm not a very good dancer," she said.

She watched the feet of couples as they passed her, slim adolescent girls, sleek-haired, expressionless men.

It looked easy, the dance.

"Neither am I," said Gorman. "Let's try it anyhow. Come on."

Ella rose and pushed away her chair. She used to be a good dancer, before she was married. My, how old-fashioned and stupid she was getting. Gorman put his arm around her and guided her out on the floor. She hesitated a minute, stumbled, then—why, it was easy, if that's all there was to it—just

walking, sort of, to music. Gorman led well.

"I thought you couldn't dance," he whispered in her ear, "same little bluff, eh?"

There were more dances, more drinks. At five, the dance crowd thinned out a little and Ella began to worry about getting away. Jim left the office at five-thirty and she had to cook dinner for him. But Myrtle had to cook dinner, too. So, after the next dance:

"Come on, girlie, it's time to go. You and I've got a dinner engagement, you know," said Myrtle. "We've had some time, boys, honest we have. The next time you two want a couple of dances, just ring me up. We'll be there dressed up like French pastry."

"What's your telephone number?" asked Gorman. Ella whispered it to him, as they went out.

Ella got home a few minutes before Jim did. Her dinners were always simple—she didn't like to cook very well—so the meal was nearly ready when he got home. The evening seemed duller than most of her evenings, though they went to the movies. She was tired of the movies, anyhow. If Jim only realized how pretty she was!

As she prepared for bed, she combed her hair in front of the pier glass, pirouetting on one toe.

Jim eyed her with a half smile.

"It seems to me," he said, "that you are spending an awful lot of time in front of that mirror, not that you aren't mighty pretty, and all that, Ella, but since you've had that mirror in the house—you're there all day long."

"Old goose," said Ella, "it's the first time in ages I've had a chance to look at myself. Why, before I got it, if I'd met myself on the street, I wouldn't have known who it was. If I was cross-eyed and tubby, maybe you'd like that better, eh?"

But she laughed to herself, too. She wasn't cross-eyed and tubby, and there were others besides Jim who thought she was good looking.

## IV

GORMAN rang her up two days later. She talked to him for a long time over the 'phone, laughing at nothing. Finally she made an appointment for the next afternoon at three at the same place.

She left the 'phone in a great good humor. It seemed mighty fine to do something like that, to have an "affair" on. It seemed quite like things in stories she read—weren't married women always doing things like that?

The next afternoon she and Gorman talked and drank and danced. She grew a little dizzy from the drinks and the heat of the café. She realized that Gorman was making love to her and that she was giggling foolishly. What did it matter? She didn't have to go to cafés with Gorman if she didn't want to. She was pretty. There were other men. But she made another engagement with Gorman before she left.

She saw Gorman several times more during the next few weeks, always in cafés in the afternoon. Then she grew tired of him. She knew he wasn't satisfied with mere friendship and she no longer found him exciting. He was beginning to get bald and he talked about himself and his business quite a lot.

Ella spent more time down town, walking around the streets, watching the people she passed, gazing into shop windows. Before she went out, she inspected herself in the mirror. Gradually, too, she began using a little more make-up. Had she been neglecting herself? All she had used before had been powder and occasionally a bit of rouge. Now she used an eyebrow pencil rather heavily and a lip stick, too. She got out a box of black court-plaster beauty spots, cut into fancy little shapes, that she had used sometimes in the evening before she was married and now she always remembered to stick one just at the corner of her left eye. The reflection in the pier glass was satisfying.

One day she walked slowly down

Michigan Boulevard, watching out of the corner of her eye, the men who loitered in front of the hotels. She knew she was looking well. In front of the Annex, she caught the eyes of a heavy-set man in gray. He looked at her speculatively, then smiled. She smiled, too. The man tipped his hat—and joined her.

"Wonderful weather we're having for fall, isn't it?" he said.

"Yes, quite wonderful," said Ella.

It was the first time she had ever done *that*. Still, it didn't seem so bad, now it was over. He looked nice enough. If anyone passing had noticed, he would have been sure they had known each other. The very fact that a man like this, well groomed, prosperous looking, had wanted to pick her up showed that she must look pretty well.

In a few minutes they were chatting on as if they had known each other for days. The man suggested tea. They went into a café. How glad Ella was that now she knew what to order and knew the new dances, too. The man's name was Hobert and he was a good dancer. Ella was nearly late for dinner again. But she had made another engagement to see Hobert.

Myrtle called the next afternoon. She had on some new furs. Ella's last year's set was badly worn and she couldn't afford new ones. She admired Myrtle's.

"These? Won them on a bet from Billie. You don't know Billie. You're to meet him Saturday night. My Billie is some boy."

"Saturday night? What do you mean? You know I can't get away on Saturday night."

"Why not?"

"Why not? Can you beat it? Mostly because Jim sticks around the house so that I can't have a thought without telling it to him. If I'm silent for five minutes he thinks I'm mad at him or sick. I see him letting me go any place, unless he goes along."

"Nothing doing. This isn't a husband-party. You can stay all night

with me. My old man's on the road. I've asked Billie in, and a fellow named Furniss for you and a Miss Miller, a girl I know, and her friend. And Billie's going to send up some drinks and it will be some little party."

"But—I can't—honest. Why, Jim would—"

"I'll fix Jim all right. When'll he be home?"

"A little after six."

"I'll stay and see him."

Jim came home and, finally, with both Ella and Myrtle begging him, both talking at once and saying, "please, pretty please," over and over, he gave his consent. He didn't approve of Ella's staying away at night—she had never been away before—but, as long as Myrtle's husband was to be out of town for the one night and Myrtle was afraid to stay alone, and Myrtle's sister, who usually stayed with her couldn't come, why, Ella might stay, if she got home early Sunday morning.

Ella was rather afraid to go, after permission had been obtained. All she wanted was a good time. She didn't want to do anything bad. Still, with a crowd of six they wouldn't do anything so terrible.

She hesitated before fully deciding to go, but, when Saturday evening came she found herself packing her bag and kissing Jim good-bye. She almost backed out then, for of course it wasn't right. First, she had lied to Jim about the five dollars and had taken his money—and he didn't have the new shoes yet, and then she had deceived him about going out to dances in the afternoon with men. Now, she was lying to him and deceiving him.

She looked in the mirror and straightened her hat. She was looking well. After all, why not? She was entitled to a good time. She was so excited that her cheeks were red even without rouge. My, but she had a good natural color. Lots of people envied her complexion.

"Bye-bye, Jim," she called, "I'll be home early in the morning."

"Good-bye," said Jim, "be a good girl."

Again she hesitated. Jim was so trusting. Oh, after all, why not?

## V

NONE of the others had arrived when she got to Myrtle's, but they came in a little later, Myrtle's Billie, a flabby young man with small eyes; Furniss, a dapper little clerk with sleeked light hair; Miss Miller, a great girl with reddened hair and slow movements, and her "friend," a thin, almost sad-faced young man named Williams.

They took up the rugs and put a record on the phonograph and started dancing. Almost at the same time, Billie started mixing drinks in the kitchen, shaking up an original cocktail in an aluminum shaker. At first Ella did not care for these cocktails, but, when the others pronounced them "great," she, too, tried to like them. Later, she did not mind them so much. There was whiskey and soda, too, and beer.

They danced until twelve, though the later dances were punctuated with uncertain kisses and much laughter. Then, there was a supper of canned things and rye bread. Nobody made a move to go home. Everyone grew more affectionate.

One o'clock, two, three, still they spooned and laughed and drank.

Ella wished there was some way for her to leave, to get home.

But she knew this would mean explanations here and to Jim. Besides the drinks had left her pleasantly warmed and excited and she found herself laughing at Billie's unpleasant jokes.

Finally, Miss Miller fell asleep, her head on her "friend's" shoulder, then: "We'll all stay all night," said one of the men. The others agreed. Ella grew dizzy and sobered at the same time. What should she do now?

But it only meant that the three women went into the one bed-room and threw themselves silently across the

one bed, without undressing. The men, wrapped in blankets, slept in the living-room. They were almost asleep before Myrtle had given them pillows.

Ella did not fall asleep for an hour or two. It was late in the morning when she was awakened by talking. Myrtle and Billie were in the dining-room. Billie was angry.

"This is a fine party," he was saying, "nothing but drinking. We were going slumming and all that and here we didn't leave the flat. I thought you were a real sport. I say, I feel like the devil."

"Oh, Billie dear," Myrtle answered him, "you didn't suggest anything else. You were having a good time, I thought. Be a good kid and don't fuss. In a week or two, we'll have another party, honest we will! Please behave now, they are waking up in there."

Ella's head hurt. Her eyes burned, too. Her clothes were crushed and uncomfortable. Every hairpin in her hair pulled. She got up, washed a little, did her hair over. Then she joined the others, who, by this time, were all in the dining-room, silent, disagreeable.

"I'm—I'm going home," said Ella.

"What's the matter with helping get breakfast, little kill-joy?" said Furniss, as he attempted to kiss her. Furniss was disheveled, yellow. She broke away from him.

"Sorry to break up the party, but I got to go home, honest, I, I got to go."

Myrtle put an arm around her.

"Quit kidding her," she said. "I promised I'd send her home early. You trot along, if you want to. We'll have a real party soon, not one of these all night drunks, a real party, girlie." Myrtle kissed her. How ugly Myrtle looked this morning, in that funny red kimono. But, in Myrtle's mirror, Ella herself did not look attractive.

It was nearly noon when she got home. Jim was reading the Sunday paper. How clean and decent her little flat looked. She loved Jim and the flat—and the housework, even. She'd never leave it again. She told Jim that

she had been awake nearly all night with a toothache. Yes, it was the same back tooth that had hurt a couple of weeks ago. Yes, she'd go to a dentist right away, in a day or two. Yes, it was better now.

For two, three weeks, a month, Ella did her housework each day and spent her afternoons at home or visiting in the neighborhood and her evenings with Jim. Then she grew restless again.

Myrtle telephoned her about several parties. Each time she found an excuse but each time she wished that there was some place that she could go, some place not as horrible and sicken-ing as Myrtle's party, but more pleasantly exciting.

She looked in the pier glass every day, of course, while she was dress-ing and when she had nothing to do.

The glass still reflected round, rosy cheeks, a fair skin, attractive brown hair, graceful curves. Waste these attractions, every day, until they were gone? Other girls did things, had good times, and got away with it. She had always been straight. What did it get her? She was getting older each year. Some day, the reflection in the mirror wouldn't be so fair. Then—

## VI

AGAIN Ella started looking at men down town. But the men that she ad-mired did not smile at her. She wouldn't flirt with those she didn't like—those who didn't look interesting. The gray-framed mirror told her that she was pretty, so—it must be clothes. Her clothes were cheap, of course. Even the new hat was no longer as perky as when she bought it. And her furs—she was wearing only the muff, she didn't care for collars—why, it was worn quite bare in spots. It had only been imitation fox to begin with. Warm brown furs—a new round muff, maybe—then people would admire her.

One afternoon she went into her favorite department store. She would

powder her nose and then price the new furs, anyhow. She hung her bag over her arm and put her muff down on a chair. When she was through powder-ing, she looked for her muff. It was gone. Somebody had walked away with it, worn as it was. Now, she was muffless, altogether.

She went to the fur department. Furs of all kinds, wonderful sables and ermines, splendid long coats with huge collars and price tags. How badly she wanted them! Even the cheaper furs were more than she could afford. If she were to get a muff to replace the stolen one, it would mean getting another cheap, ratty one in the base-ment. The salespeople were busy. She fingered over the soft skins. If only—

She picked up a muff, a big ball of rich brown marten. She thrust her hands deep into its soft satin lining. If only—

She looked around. There was no one looking at her. Why not? No one would know. Why couldn't she have pretty things? She could almost see her reflection in the pier glass, hold-ing the muff up to her face. Why not try—and then pretend that it was an accident—if anyone—

She walked toward the elevators, hardly daring to breathe, afraid to turn around.

She almost felt a hand on her shoul-der.

She reached the elevators.

She saw one of the indicating lights turn red.

If only she could get on the elevator and down—in time.

The elevator stopped. It was crowded. She snuggled back into it. It started, stopped, started again. Stopped.

Finally, the first floor. She got out, walked toward the entrance. She had heard that, often, when people stole—took things—that the detectives let them go until they got outside the door with them. That proved, in some way, that they were really stolen. Would they—would some one?

She walked toward the door, trying not to go too fast.

Just as she reached it she almost collided with a woman in black.

"Pardon me," she said tremblingly.

Then she was in the revolving doors.

She was outside. No one stopped or questioned her. She was safe. The muff was hers.

Almost weak, she walked along.

Furtively, she removed the little lead seal and the tag and looked at it. The tag was marked \$47.50. She smiled. She could never have afforded that, in years.

She threw the tag into the street.

In another store she rearranged her hair, then went down Michigan Boulevard. How she longed to see herself in the new mirror, posing with the new muff. My, but it was a beauty, quite the latest thing. The excitement had given her new color.

On Michigan Boulevard she passed a man, a slender, attractive man with a lean face and rather a long nose. She liked him, and smiled. He smiled, too. Five minutes later, over a sandwich and a highball, they were chatting together. It was the muff that had done it, of course. The man's name was Hargrave. He lived in New York, but he came to Chicago several times a year. He was going away for a few days next week and then would be back again, for a month. He was quite lonesome in Chicago, though, of course, now that he had met Miss—oh, yes, Elliott—

Ella liked him. He had seen all of the new shows. He knew a lot of new dance steps. He had read a lot of books and had traveled, too. Yes, she would be delighted to meet him again, tomorrow.

At home, in the pier glass, the muff did look wonderfully attractive. She told Jim that she had bought it at a sale for twelve dollars, because she had lost her old one and because it was a bit damaged. He knew little about furs—didn't even recognize that the muff was of the most fashionable shape.

"I only hope that you don't get to caring too much about clothes and things," he said. "Somehow, you seem to care more, lately. I'm a poor man, you know, and I like you to look nice and I'll give you all I can, but I only hope—"

Ella scarcely heard him. She was thinking of Hargrave's yellow-brown eyes.

She met Hargrave down town in one of the cafés nearly every day for two weeks. Then, one day, he told her that he was going out of town—only a three days' trip—on business. A lonesome trip—then—why wouldn't she go along? The town was an amusing one and had a fine hotel. Hargrave hinted at a pleasant time, at pretty clothes to wear on the trip.

Ella knew that Hargrave was rich. He dressed expensively and always spent a lot of money. He had already given her little things. But the invitation came suddenly, though their conversation had not precluded the possibility of it. They had joked, sentimentally, about "pleasant days just by themselves."

But, at the invitation, Ella felt stunned, then indignant. How could Hargrave think that she would really do a thing like that? Then—well, she did want to go. She could say she was going to stay at Myrtle's. She wanted excitement—surely the trip would be exciting enough.

Hargrave was to leave Wednesday night and get back Saturday, or at the latest, perhaps Sunday morning. He thought that the best plan was for Ella to meet him down town Wednesday afternoon. Then they could shop for pretty things to wear.

Ella changed her mind about going a dozen times. First, it seemed all right—just a sort of a lark—lots of other women did things like that and weren't found out. Who would tell Jim anyhow? He didn't ever go any place or know many people. Then—oh—she couldn't go, it wasn't right or square. She'd ring up Hargrave and call the trip off. But, Hargrave ap-

preciated her and told her such lovely things and the pier glass showed that he wasn't flattering her, either.

She didn't fully make up her mind to go until it was time to dress to keep the appointment. She started dressing, hardly realizing what she was doing. It was bad—but Jim would never know. What if he did? There were others who would be nicer to her than Jim, perhaps. This wasn't so much worse than—taking the muff—after all. Nothing happened then. People could get away with things like that, if they tried.

She wrote Jim a note, telling him that Myrtle had called for her and that she would spend a day or two with her—her husband was called out of town suddenly and her sister was sick. She placed the note in the frame of the pier glass where Jim would be sure to see it.

She started arranging her hair, brushing the soft waves slowly. She was looking closely in the glass, admiring her fine color, the rose shades casting their soft glow over her.

Then, as she looked, something happened to the electricity and the little rose-shaded electric lights went out. There was only natural daylight in the room then. How changed she was!

Ella looked again, even more closely. Had it been just the rose-shaded lights that made her look so fair? She looked different, somehow, now that the lights were out. Still, she was pretty, of course, and young. She examined her face, standing within an inch or two of the mirror. Maybe she didn't look so awfully well, after all. Still, Hargrave said—

She smiled. For some reason, the reflection of the smile in the mirror angered her. She hit at herself in the mirror.

"You, you smarty!" she said.

The hitting had hurt her hand. She smiled again and the smile made her grow still angrier.

"It's you, you old pier glass; it's all you; You made me steal from Jim the day I got you; then deceive him and lie to him and steal the muff and now—"

Suddenly, she realized what going with Hargrave would really mean, afterwards, her whole life afterwards.

She had stolen and lied and been drunk, as it was, even now. Ever since she had bought the pier glass she had been deceiving and lying and stealing. And Jim—who had always been so good about things—

She hit with both of her doubled fists against the mirror.

The mirror swayed, the gray enamelled standards were frail.

There was a crash.

Ella grew faint, stumbled.

The splintered glass fell around her.

She screamed.

She looked at the shattered pier glass lying at her feet.

Something white lay among the broken fragments.

It was the note to Jim.

Ella picked it up and read it slowly. She could hardly believe that she had written it only a half hour before. Somehow, now, things seemed different. She tore it into bits and let them fall into the broken fragments of the mirror.

Unconsciously, she glanced into the small mirror of the dressing table and stuck a hair pin into her hair. She would have to go back to using the little dressing-table looking-glass, after all. Well, Jim had always liked her well enough when she had dressed by its reflection.

She giggled, nervously.

"Oh, my," she said to herself, "I'll have to work fast if I want to get all this glass cleared away and go to the grocery and then get dinner in time for Jim. I want to have an especially good dinner for him tonight."



## BUBBLES BURSTING

By Helen Hersh

**W**E all sat silently around the bulletin board in the Grand Central station waiting for the Boston Express to be posted. And we all eyed each other grimly. A murky, yellow gloom pervaded the place.

I amused myself imagining whom each of those around me would meet.

My eyes first lingered on a young Greek god. He, surely, was there to meet his bride, after the first separation. His calm was a mask for tremendous inner emotion. I could almost see, in his far-off gaze, the picture of a lovely, doll-like wife.

Then there was a handsome young matron, there to meet her husband. Two chorus girls awaiting youths from New Haven. A grandmother to meet her grandson. A large, painted, non-respectable lady, waiting for her travelling salesman. And a footman waiting for a princess in a Paquin creation.

But—the footman met a shabby old maid. The non-respectable lady met a simple little girl in convent garb who called her Mama. The handsome young matron met another handsome young matron with a child, who cried, "Hello, Grandma." The grandmother looked deep into the eyes of a mere boy, and I caught her whisper, "The week you have been away, darling, has been an eternity. Life without love—." The two chorus girls met a clergyman, who kissed them and said, "My dear daughters, Mother has sent some jam—in my bag."

And the Greek god! I wasn't wrong about his waiting for his wife, and perhaps I wasn't wrong about the picture in his eyes. He met a blowsy, black-haired person, who jerked a dirty little boy by the arms, and said, "Kiss Papa, dearie."



**A**N efficient married man is one who never makes the mistake of accidentally sending the winter's coal to the apartment and the silk underwear to the house.



**T**HE reason why bachelors make such excellent lovers is the same as why husbands make such excellent bachelors.



**S**CANDAL: the sauce that boils over the pot of forbidden fruit.



# HENRI ALWAYS SAYS SO!

By Achmed Abdullah

## I

**A**MONG his friends it had always been a moot point if the character of Count Gérard de Pontmartin—fantastic, quixotic, and, in a way, tenebritic, with a pale charm which moved one's appreciation of the pathetic and a mammoth melancholy which moved one's appreciation of the comical—was an atavistic throwback to Undine, the water fairy, from whom his family claimed descent, or the rather more prosy result of his earlier training and milieu.

The Count himself held firm to the legendary theory which he regarded in the light of an esthetic bulwark against the coarse and clamorous cloutings of lusty young democracy.

He used to say that thanks to the newspapers, open plumbing, department stores, and the abolition of certain seignioral manor rights, all sorts of people, including free—and union—masons, socialists, Protestants, Jews, and South-Americans, were laying claim to what had formerly been a gentleman's privileges, even to bend-sinisters and the gout; but Undine—a fairy ancestress with a shiny, silvery, scaly fish-tail!

"Why," he would exclaim, "here is one thing which you cannot buy across the bargain counter of the *Bon Marché*!"

Mademoiselle Liane Desjazer, on the other hand, used to make slighting remarks about Undine and about the taste, the manners, and the ethics of the ancient de Pontmartin who had mated with her.

"My poor little Gérard," she would say, with an impatient toss of her short,

thick, russet mane, "the thought of that ancestor of yours embracing a specimen of a half-fish with a tail instead of legs is beastly. It is disgusting and infective! One does not do such things—not even in an aquarium of the Outer Boulevards!

"And," here she would put a rapid little kiss on his aristocratic beak, "you are such a romantic old dear, not because of that animal of an Undine, but because of the life you have lived. It's the milieu which counts—Henri always says so!"

"Who is Henri?"—this from the depth of the armchair where the Count was discussing his after-dinner perfecto and *fine champagne*, and then Liane's ready reply that Henri was the stage electrician at the theater where she played.

"An elderly man," she elaborated, "much, much older than you—with a long, curly white beard, and a wife who does scrubbing, and seven children"—a rapid complotting of statements without the slightest foundation of truth; and the Count realized it.

But he sighed and said nothing. For—here he smiled and kissed her narrow, pleasurable white hand—Liane was young, so young! And so, doubtless, was Henri!

She was indeed only nineteen, but already Paris was at her feet. Amaury Delande had written plays for her; Coty had called his newest and most exotic perfume after her; the Abbé Lapraze, over at the church of Paul de Saint-Victor, had anathematized her; and Arthur Meyer had said in the *Gaulois* that she looked like a Watteau painted by Forain—and the Count was sixty-five,

gouty, addicted to flannel underwear, and arrived at that epoch in life where one breakfasts on a bromo-seltzer, a cigarette, and no food.

Yet it would be unjust to say his ancient name and splendid fortune were the only links which bound Liane to him; for there were also his great soul, his kindly heart, and the fact that his wrinkled old hands were as soft as silk and exhaled a fine, thin perfume which could not be matched the whole length of the Rue Royale.

And if once in a while, in a moment of forgetting, she quoted Henri—though at times his name seemed to be Jacques or Roland or Max—she knew that M. de Pontmartin would smile and understand and forgive; for there was his romantic, quixotic nature—the result, as she said, of his earlier milieu.

The Count had spent the greater part of his youth and his manhood in Tunis, in the diplomatic service of France, finally becoming the official resident at the Court of His Highness Si-Ali Hammouda Bey, Regent of Tunis, and the latter potentate's intimate friend. The sojourn there and the friendship with the grave Arab had given to M. de Pontmartin's character and viewpoint a fantastic, exotic note which he took with him into his private life—long after he had left the pink-and-white office building among the dusty, straggling, sad palms of the Kasbah and had taken up his residence in Paris, in a squat old house across from the Place Royale, where it seemed to him that he could see, gliding among the foliage of the gardens, the shadow of Marion Delorme and the ensanguined spectre of one of his ancestors executed on the Place de Grève by orders of Cardinal Richelieu.

Thence, too, looking from the window of his salon, he could see the little apartment where the young genius of Victor Hugo had first taken wings and the tiny room where the sublime Rachel had slowly agonized: "the land of the dead who try to speak," to quote the Count's words; and then he would think of his own dead youth.

Perhaps he had made a mistake in choosing this ancient quarter of Paris as residence. It accentuated the grey burden and the pathetic impotence of his own age—and he loved Liane; he loved her nineteen years and her short, thick, russet mane . . . and she? Why—she babbled of Henri, who at times was called Roland or Max or Jacques.

Never for a moment did the Count think of making a scene with her, of mentioning to her the fact that it was his money which paid for her apartment, her jewels, her furs, her motor-cars, and her fluffy Persian kittens. For he was a gentleman of France and, too, he had lived in the Orient where in all matters, including the eternal feminine, he had absorbed the grave, calm lessons of the turbaned lands. Thus while, if all other methods failed, he would have gladly tied the little Liane into a sack, together with a live, biting, scratching cat, and thrown her into the sea—just as his old friend Si-Ali Hamouda Bey would have done—he was orientalized enough, on the other hand, to know that first he must use all the other methods—methods which say that a man must fight and struggle if he wants to keep the one he loves.

Fight and struggle! But how could he fight—he who was sixty-five, gouty, addicted to flannel underwear and, if the truth be told, to occasional hot-water bottles?

Only this morning he had seen her drive in the Bois by the side of a slim young man with ultra-British clothes and ultra-Gallic whiskers. Later in the day, when mildly confronted with the fact, she would doubtless tell him that the young man in question was some minor employee at the theater—"un jeune homme sérieux, my poor little Gérard—a scene-shifter, happily married to the daughter of a wholesale plumber of Passy—three children. Surely," here a rapid kiss, "you would not be jealous of a plumber's son-in-law . . . with three children!"

And what could he say or do—though it seemed to him that the plumber's son-in-law bore a strange resemblance

to the young Marquis Gontrain de Rocqueplan!

## II

M. DE PONTMARTIN sighed as he walked along the Seine, leaning heavily on his cane. One of the ducks on the river bank untucked its head and awoke, resettling with a shivered rustle of brown-and-green feathers. Somehow the sight saddened the Count; somehow the shivered rustle of the little bird's metallic plumage seemed to stand for everything which was cold and aged and dejected.

It had been different, years ago, in Tunis. There had been women then—many women who had loved him, Frenchwomen and Jewesses from Morocco and even native Arab women. It had been said of him that he had loved his way from the North of Tunis to the South and back again—from the Dar-el-Bey to Belvedere, from the Bou-Cornine to Sidi-bou-Said.

*Sidi-bou-Said!*—with its flaunting gardens, its entangled, exuberant mingling of leaves and spiky creepers and waxen, odorous flowers! M. de Pontmartin's memory flashed backward—

He remembered an evening in spring—many, many years ago—when he and Si-Ali Hamouda Bey had driven out to Sidi-bou-Said, to a little exquisite Moorish building of fretted white marble and Andalusian majolica which, back in the Sixteenth Century, had been built by Spanish Moors for the harem of a Bey of Tunis. Now the place was used for native entertainments, and they had driven over to see a famous desert dancer come to Tunis for the first time to do the *danse du ventre* as it is danced among the black tents.

He remembered the scene: the Tunisian dancers, huge bundles of spangled silk stuffed with quivering rolls of fat, and at their feet the blind musicians—and he and Si-Ali Hamouda Bey, smoking their nargilehs, sipping their fig-water, and holding in their hands little bouquets of jessamine in token of joy and gallant intentions.

First there had been the usual stupid dances. Then the desert woman had made her appearance. She had danced well, of course; but it had not been her dancing which had caused him and the Bey to cover the ground in front of her feet with jewels and flowers. It had been the song she had sung—a throbbing, lilting song of the desert—of that mysterious Africa which squats to the South of Tunis in mad, amazing, unhuman stillness—

It had been the song of a jewel; a jewel which meant to its owner everlasting youth and everlasting love. Afterwards, Si-Ali Hamouda Bey had told him that the jewel—a flawless, ten-carat emerald—really existed—"and as to the promise of everlasting youth and love," he had added, "even to that is there a foundation of fact. For only the man blessed with the greatest strength of youth can win it; only the greatest love in the world can conquer it"; and then he had told him where the emerald was. It was the usual tale of a priceless stone set in the head of a Galla idol—far, far South in the heart of the Central-African jungles; the sort of tale which is repeated, with innumerable variations and embroideries, from Morocco to the Cape. Only this tale had the advantage of being true.

"Many men have tried," Si-Ali Hamouda Bey had wound up, "but they died—all—they died the slow death of Africa. Perhaps," smiling into his short-cropped mustache, "their strength of youth was not great enough—perhaps their love was not deep enough!"

Youth and strength—and love!

Thus the Count's thoughts as he sat by the open window, smoking countless cigarettes, looking out into the Place Royale—watching the night through, until he could see the distant buildings change from indefinite outlines into black, jagged silhouettes. Finally he rose, with a shiver. The lamps still burned in the streets, but the little wind that rises with dawn came blowing up from the Seine and rustled in the trees.

M. de Pontmartin entered the library to write some letters; and, two days la-

ter, the polite world of Paris saw in the *Gaulois* that the Count had gone on a lengthy journey, while Mademoiselle Liane Desjazer opened a letter which contained a handsome draft on the Crédit National, a world of tender old-fashioned messages, and a strange postscript which said that the Count would be gone for an indefinite length of time and that he would bring back his strength and all the love in the world—or die in the attempt.

Liane smiled.

"What a delightful, romantic, ridiculous old dear!" she said.

Then she sent her maid to deposit the draft and telephoned to Henri—that month his name was Henri.

### III

PARIS forgot the Count after a month or two, and Liane only remembered him when the stubs in her cheque book showed that her bank account was steadily decreasing and—that was early the following spring—when she strolled through the Luxembourg Gardens and smelled the scent of certain spring flowers. They reminded her of the fine, thin perfume of M. de Pontmartin's wrinkled old hands; and then she sighed—and she telephoned to the Count's valet, who informed her that Monsieur had not been heard from.

Spring had passed into autumn and autumn into fall. The new comedy which Amaury Delande was writing for Liane was nearing completion—and Liane herself was sitting in her little pink boudoir, dabbing at her cheeks with a powder-puff and thinking, with a melancholy shrug of her slim young shoulders, that after all she would have to accept the attentions, the limousine, and the bulbous wallet of a certain millionaire brewer who had recently come from Alsace to Paris. And his hands—his hands—they were coarse and red—and there was no perfume to them; only a heavy male scent of nicotine and alcohol—and—

Suddenly there were two rings at the bell—a short ring, then a long one.

Liane threw the powder-puff on the table.

Two rings!

She remembered—Gérard—Gérard de Pontmartin.

"Quick," she cried to her maid, "quick—*mais enfin*—open, open!"

A moment later, M. de Pontmartin came into the boudoir, and when Liane saw him she screamed.

His corpulent old body had shrunk to a skeleton; his soft wrinkled old hands seemed like agonized, yellow claws; he dragged his left foot like a leaden, lifeless weight; straight across his face was a terrible, blood-red scar—the scar of a wound which had blotted out one eye; and he trembled, trembled—in every limb and nerve and muscle—

"What has happened to you?" cried Liane. "You are sick! You must sit down—you—"

The Count lifted one of his agonized yellow claws.

"Here, my little Liane," he said with a strange, flat voice, "I have brought . . ." and he tumbled into a chair, overcome with weakness, while from his hand a small package dropped on the carpet.

Liane picked it up.

She opened it; and inside, on a bed of dried tropical leaves, she saw a large, flawless emerald—like a drop of crystallized green fire.

She held it against her white throat and looked into the mirror.

"You—you like it?" came the Count's strange, flat voice, and Liane turned around with a smile.

"Yes, yes," she said, "of course I like it. But I do wish you had brought me a ruby. Red stones are much more becoming to me"; and then she added—"Henri always says so!"

Count Gérard de Pontmartin started at the name. Then a queer smile ran over his face, giving the blood-red scar a fantastic upward twist.

"Henri!" he whispered, with a quaint blending of self-pity and contentment, "ah—but it does one good to hear the old name again," and, trembling painfully, he stooped and kissed Liane's white hand.

## BLUE BOSTON

By John Macy

### I

THE sign greets you if you happen to look out of the car window not far from the Back Bay station. It advertises a restaurant. The legend reads: "THE ONLY BRIGHT SPOT IN BOSTON."

This claim to unique brilliancy is in some measure justified; for certainly there are no other bright spots in Boston. But the luster of this particular place is not in itself high; it is due to the drabness of its surroundings. If it were transplanted to Broadway it would be conspicuous for its obscurity. Bostonians do not frequent it. We true blue inhabitants of the Back Bay go there only when we have to entertain a cousin from Iowa who has come to us by way of New York and has had his eyes adjusted to high lights and his ears attuned to orchestral vehemence. This, then, we say proudly apologetic, is the best we can show you; it's quite like New York, isn't it—er . . . ?

But it isn't like New York.

And it isn't like Boston.

We look about us and see not a soul that we know, except perhaps another Bostonian in the same predicament of hospitality, assiduously attentive to a guest who looks like a western business man. There are some actors and actresses who one suspects are sick for Broadway. The wheels of gaiety creak and the air is heavy with the effort of enjoyment.

Boston dines at home. Except on Thursdays, when the cook is out, the pleasant dining rooms of certain quiet

clubs are sparsely populated. And the hotels exist only for the traveler. Boston's nearest simulation of a metropolitan hotel has tried gallantly but with indifferent success to conduct itself as if it were in a real city. The only occasions on which it wears an appearance of metropolitan life are during a business men's convention and the day before a Harvard-Yale football game.

I interrupted this profound paragraph to stroll over to the hotel and inspect it with the eye of a trained sociologist. It was the hour for tea and dancing—so the posters announced. But there was little sign of these pleasant diversions. A few couples limped in the ball room, and in the tea room the waiters stood idle. I had to take something stronger than tea to revive my depressed spirit. The bar at least gave one a sense of humane enjoyment; not even Boston can take the cheer out of alcohol.

On my way back to my typewriter I passed the old Brunswick. Men were sitting on the "piazza," their chairs tipped back against the wall, just as they do in the one hotel of a small town. I had not the courage to go in, but went on down Boylston Street to another hostelry. Even at that early hour people were beginning to dine. I could not explain to any one not familiar with Boston how I know it, but I am absolutely certain that more than half of the diners were from Malden, Everett and Melrose, and such places; their suburbanism was unmistakable.

Any keen observer of Boston hotels will know what I mean. It is a

peculiar little-flea-on-big-flea suburbanism. For Boston itself is suburban with nothing to be suburb to. It ought to have been like Brooklyn, dependent on a real city. The accidents of geography have inhibited it from fulfilling a function which it might have fulfilled gracefully. But left alone to bear metropolitan responsibilities, it has grown round shouldered under the burden.

I could live in Jersey City, Montclair or New Rochelle,  
 I could live in Evanston or Germantown;  
 But to live in Lynn, or Malden, or Woburn would be hell,  
 And as for Everett, I'd rather drown.  
 The New England country's pleasant and some little towns are pretty,  
 But Lord save me from the suburbs of a suburban city!

## II

I HAVE lain awake nights pondering on why Boston has no good restaurants. A generation ago there were one or two places which enjoyed a more than local reputation and were celebrated by the witty versifiers of the time, who are now, alas, as dead as the lobsters they sang about. If Bostonians of a period when Boston was more Bostonian than it is now could support and appreciate good eating places, why are we so poor today in gastronomic opportunities?

I offered an explanation, but with little assurance. A generation ago there were in Boston a few accomplished, interesting men who enjoyed each other's company at dinner; they formed a nucleus for a sort of semi-Bohemian restaurant life. When they died or grew old there was nobody to take their place. The Bostonian of today is not interesting to himself or to others. And so he has lost all sense of the pleasant gregariousness of dining in public. Eating is a private necessity, a mere physical process which he performs perfunctori-

ly, as he makes his toilet, without zest, with nothing of the fine art of fellowship. Among civilized people dining is a joy and an art. The Bostonian soul is timid in the presence of joy and insensitive to art.

If the Bostonian makes sad work of the legitimate delights of the palate, one can guess, without much but negative evidence to reply on, what his attitude is toward forbidden pleasures. It is the attitude of hypocritical Puritanism, which denies the flesh in public and indulges it in hiding. To the casual night stroller Vice does not show her face openly, and only the remote swish of her skirt is audible. She is voiceless, mirthless. It may be that our police force has clapped a heavy hand on her mouth. For you know Boston has a fairly good police force. A year or two ago a notorious crook on trial in Chicago testified that there were only two police departments in America that he and his kind could not work—those, namely, of Boston and of Omaha. (Boston and Omaha papers please copy.)

Or it may be that the silence and invisibility of vice in Boston are explained by the remark of an experienced *fille de joie*: "This town is no place for us professionals; there are too many amateurs at work."

A recent experience of mine offers evidence, mute and inglorious, but significant. One night four of us were sitting in a club. We were being cruelly bored by a publisher, the ineluctable business guest of one of us. He talked much and drank little. At one o'clock he went to bed, leaving us in a state of intellectual collapse. The club bar was closed. In desperation we decided to go in quest of an illegal drink. Two of us were journalists, the third an architect, the fourth a painter. We were all about forty and all married. None of us had made nocturnal excursions for fifteen or twenty years.

We accosted an ancient cab-driver in Park Square; cab-drivers used to

know the secret haunts of pleasure. This veteran, though anxious for a fare, confessed that he did not know where to take us. A younger man in a Ford car was equally ignorant. He took us to a so-called club where he thought we might be admitted. The steward who cautiously half opened the door, looked us over briefly, shook his head and shut the door in our faces.

Finally my fellow journalist remembered a certain woman of his undergraduate days.

We found her name and number in the telephone book and went in a taxicab to a place far up Washington Street. It had taken us two hours and a half to find a place where we could pay a dollar for a bottle of beer! We ordered two rounds, and at about five in the wan morning we left, four sober dejected jackasses.

*C'est Boston!*

But there is one sort of house of easy morals which flourishes openly in Boston—the newspaper. If a city is known by the newspapers it keeps, Boston is a witless old dupe, content with decayed charms and vacuous vulgarity.

I used to be a sort of exchange editor and saw newspapers from all parts of the country, so that I have some experience on which to base my judgment that, of the twenty-five largest American cities, Boston, Pittsburg and Cincinnati have the worst newspapers. We have not a single really good one, with the possible exception of the *Christian Science Monitor*, a unique institution supported by a special clientèle.

### III

As this is no place to sadden ourselves with the pains of politics, it is enough to say that Boston has a rotten government; the dirty and ill-paved streets are visible evidence sufficiently damning. The citizens of the Back Bay may ascribe the corrup-

tion of the city to the overwhelming Irish vote. But these citizens do not understand their own city. The few that do understand it through the underground relations of big business are partners in the prevalent corruption. The pure and high-minded are as aloof from life as Brahma. When they set out to combat the forces of darkness they put at their head a respectable banker with a colorless personality. They do not understand that many of us, right or wrong, see no fundamental ethical difference between the legalized exploitation of the public through the sale of bonds of doubtful value and the illegal robbing of the city through the circuitous processes of political influence.

They are quaintly ignorant, these good Back Bay folk. They promise us the wholesome bread of honesty and they give us a tough, thin slice of cold roast Boston. The city refuses to bite. Sometimes they seem to be disingenuous as well as ignorant.

If you wish to envisage the city, walk down the esplanade; the esplanade and the Charles River Basin, especially at night, are a glory of which any city might be proud. Beginning above Harvard Bridge, the esplanade runs down the Back Bay behind the wealthy houses of Beacon Street, then bends northeast away from the prosperous quarter, dives under a bridge and emerges in sight of poor tenements. The upper and the lower ends of the esplanade are distinct worlds. Their divergence is much more striking than the contrast between, say, the Bowery and Fifth Avenue, because the esplanade is a continuous walk and the worlds it connects are closely contiguous. Of a fine day the upper half bears a stream of ordinary citizens, not obviously stamped with the mark of the Back Bay or any other mark, but presenting as a whole the appearance of mediocre gentility. Continue down below the Union Boat Club and you swim into a stream of a different

color, of swart faces and strange tongues.

This lower stream sometimes overflows above Arlington Street and discolors the upper stream, but the upper stream never descends below the Boat Club. The twain do meet, but whether the east misunderstands the west or only envies and resents it, certainly the west makes no effort to know the east. The esplanade images Boston for me. The Back Bay is a province of a provincial town; it is indeed a back water in a city which is itself a back water with reference to the rest of the country. Our Curleys and Fitzgeralds know everything that is encircled by the esplanade and the water front round to Dorchester Bay and back again. In a generation the elder Boston stock has not produced a statesman with vision enough to see across Boston Common.

And (to have done with the horrors of politics and come to something I know more about) the modern descendants of the old Boston stock have not produced a single book of first-rate importance. By that I do not mean to suggest the standard of the Literature of the Ages, but the reasonable standard set by the best that Americans have done during the past thirty years. A negative generality is a shaky proposition to maintain, and it may be that some Bostonian has written a good book which I have missed; perhaps years hence I shall look back and despise and pity myself for not having known that even as I wrote these ephemeral lines the wings of immortality hovered over the neighboring street where Reginald Altonbottom was composing his poetic masterpiece. However, I am in the way of knowing about Reginald, if Reginald there be. And I have not heard of him.

There is one I have heard of, one whom I know with a rather reluctant intimacy. That is Augustus Wigglesworth Browne. He is a sub-minor poet and critic. He belongs to

the Authors' Club of Boston. The Authors' Club seems to be composed of men and women who cannot or do not write. Some of them may once have written something which is now forgotten; indeed one of the requirements for admission to the Club is to have published a volume. Bulk, subject and quality are not defined. Perhaps a cook-book would do. But a cook-book can be useful.

Consider the case of my friend, Augustus Wigglesworth Browne. He may not be the most distinguished member of the Authors' Club, but I suspect that he is fairly representative. Twenty years ago he published in the *Atlantic Monthly* an essay on "The Influence of Goethe on Carlyle." He followed this with an essay on "The Influence of Carlyle on Emerson," which was also published in the *Atlantic Monthly*. A third essay, "The Influence of Emerson on Maeterlinck," was rejected by the *Atlantic*. Browne collected the three essays in a volume entitled "Continuative Comparisons: Three Studies in Appreciation." The book had not a great success. I suggested to Browne that he bring out a new edition with an added essay on the "Influence of Maeterlinck on George Cohan," and a general introduction to be called "The Influence of Literature on Criticism." For that suggestion I was not liked.

Later Browne wrote a tragedy in blank verse, "A Son of Richelieu." A scene from this play was produced in the underground theater of the Cavern Club under the direction of a professor of dramaturgy of Harvard University. The guest of honor was M. Tiensmonnaies, the distinguished French dramatist, who had come to this country to supervise the rehearsals of Mr. Sheldon's version of that powerful study of modern society, "The Wart." As M. Tiensmonnaies does not speak English, none of us knew what he thought of Browne's work. I thought it rather

good in one respect—it was utterly unlike Bulwer-Lytton.

#### IV

Not only is native Boston sterile, but it seems to have a bad effect on talented strangers who bring hither their literary gifts. It damaged Aldrich, to what extent we shall never know, by conventionalizing his delicate whimsical genius into middle-class regularity. Several younger writers have suffered, but it would be unkind to name them. I should advise any writer of promising ability to go south, west or north rather than abide in a town that stopped thinking thirty years ago, a town whose culture is neither profoundly rooted in the ages nor actively related to contemporaneous interests. Youth is susceptible to the success, real or specious, which it sees accorded to maturity, and it cannot be wholesome for undeveloped ambition to dwell in a place where local pride does honor to professors and other members of the professional and semi-leisure classes who go through the motions of writing books, unaware that beneath a certain superficial elegance is a complete lack of vitality. When Mr. Robert Frost entitled one of his books of admirable verse "North of Boston," he probably intended no more than to indicate the woods and fields of New Hampshire. But to my perversity the title suggests something more; the spirit of modern poetry seems to be taking definitive leave of the city; her heel has spurned the wretched pavements forever. *Ecco la città morta!*

Yet we are not quite dead. Our anemic culture is to some extent revivified by infusions from other times and places. If our spontaneous vitality is low, we are fortunate in having vitality injected into us. The unrivalled Symphony Orchestra, gathered from all parts of the world, is subsidized by a Boston banker without whose aid, at least in the

beginning, it would not have been possible. For that splendid institution the most unfilial son of Boston can have nothing but admiration. On the grave of the late Boston Opera it is not necessary to shed a tear. It deserved to die. Corrupt as we are, we should not have been expected to accord the approval of active support to such a notorious management. Moreover, trained as we are, or hope we are, by the superb Symphony Orchestra, we were right in refusing to pay first-class prices for second-rate performances.

Yes, the genius of other times and other places, invited within our gates or forced upon us, keeps us interesting. There is the Public Library. Mr. Sargent has just finished putting up all but the last of the decorations which he was commissioned to do twenty-five years ago. I do not know the vocabulary which is apropos of art; and perhaps in the presence of great painting it is as well to be silent. But I know that as long as the Sargent decorations endure and as long as there are seeing eyes in the world people will come to look and admire.

It would be absurd to suggest that Mr. Sargent's amazing vigor belongs to the past, unless it be to the past of the everlasting masters; but certainly the impulse which gave to Boston the library building and the treasures within it is the impulse of a generation before ours, an impulse which we show no signs of renewing. The original architects, McKim, Mead & White, enlisted the services of Sargent, Chavannes, St. Gaudens, Abbey and French. The Library has other architects now. St. Gaudens is dead; and instead of the figures, for which he made studies, to be placed in front of the Library, we have those chunks of metal by Mr. Bela Pratt.

I hope that some dark night one of the luminous devils in Mr. Sargent's cartoons will slip down and remove Mr. Pratt's bronzes to a place where they will be fused to something even more shapeless. We could

not prevent local talent from building the Custom House tower and the wings of the State House, and nothing short of a beneficent earthquake can relieve us of them. But we ought to have prevented, if necessary by violence, the placing of those horrible females on the threshold that leads to Sargent and Chavannes.

On the frieze of the Library is written "Dedicated to the Advancement of Learning." The dedication is warranted by the rich collections left by Bostonians of older times. But those in charge of the library to-day are indifferent to modern culture. In the delivery room in the presence of Abbey's pictures (of which the descriptive guide was written by Henry James) is a special case of cheap fiction for the ignorant. But in the main catalogue you will find the titles of only four of the dozen or more volumes of the greatest living writer of English, Joseph Conrad! I am sadly reminded of a song that used to be sung by the late Ned Hunt of the cataloguing department, a delightful man who loved literature:

*Oh, the Public Libraree!  
What a pleasant place to be!  
Where each Joan picks up her Johnny  
And the bums read papers free.*

## V

THE advancement of learning? Boston's reputation for educational advantages rests on old foundations that need to be rebuilt. The complacent Harvard attitude of mind, apparently solid and unshakable, is a weak structure in danger of being crumpled by the weight of reality.

There is too much Harvard in Boston and too much Boston in Harvard, and it is difficult to say which has the worse effect on the other. Probably both. If Harvard were moved to Kansas it would do Kansas good. If the University of Kansas were moved to Boston, it might do something for Boston. There is a system of exchange professors. I wish we might go the whole way and swap universities. I am not thinking of the technical instruction offered by Harvard; I am not interested in that. What I deplore is the assumption of intellectual superiority with little of the substance of culture to justify it; and the concomitant assumption of social eminence. The Harvard graduate who sells bonds on State Street does not understand that the fact that he is a Harvard graduate lends no interest either to him or to his occupation.

A little story dramatically illuminates the situation. At a dinner party there was some discussion about the order of going down to table. One man seriously suggested that precedence should be determined by the years of the gentlemen's classes at Harvard. It did not occur to him that in such a company there might be a gentleman who had been to Yale or to no college at all. In the elegant diction cultivated by the Harvard English Department: Can you beat it?

Jeffrey Roche, one of our imported Irish poets, once ended a clever poem with the motto: "*Praegelida erit dies reliqua cum Bostonia.*" I am afraid the mercury is going steadily down.



LOVE, of course, is a disease that never kills—but neither does a darning needle rammed under the finger-nail.



# THE MOST CYNICAL THING IN THE WORLD

By Winthrop Parkhurst

**O**NCE there was a man who was very cynical indeed. He prided himself on the fact that in the whole world there was not another man quite so cynical as he.

When he heard a fine sermon on temperance he said, "Well, now I suppose that preacher has earned enough money today to stay drunk on till the end of the week."

When he listened to a piece of beautiful music and the rest of the audience was completely carried away by it he said, "Well, now, I suppose lots of people think they have been divinely thrilled by this piece of music, but as for me I know that the tympani in their ears have been agreeably tickled, and that is all."

When a man was run over by a motor bus almost under his very eyes he said, "Well, now, that is too bad, of course, but the average number of deaths each month in the streets of New York is fourteen, and somebody, you understand, has simply got to keep up the average."

And when, a hardened and cynical bachelor of thirty, he proposed to and was rejected by a fascinating widow of twenty-four, he said, "Well, now, that is too bad, and it is a great blow to my pride, of course, to be rejected. But only fancy if this young woman had actually accepted me instead!"

And he smiled cynically and passed on his way, and commenced counting up the number of his unhappily married friends on his fingers, but soon had to stop because he ran out of fingers.

There was probably not another man in the whole world quite so cynical as he. Nothing was too sacred for him to jest about; nothing was so pathetic or so sad as to fail to bring a smile to his lips. A caustic epigram was ever on his tongue. He delighted in pinning people to the wall of his philosophy with the shaft of his wit, and then watch them squirm like captive butterflies. And the more they squirmed the more he smiled, and the deeper became his conviction that human emotion was a very childish and futile thing, and that the human race was nothing but mud which had somehow become active, and that all its dreams and visions and aspirations were so many cheap chemical reactions which today are and tomorrow are no more.

His friends, of course, were greatly shocked by his flippant attitude toward life, and did everything in their power to change it. They tried to show the man that human emotion was too sacred a thing to jest about; they tried to demonstrate to him, gently but firmly, that a human life was something very, very wonderful indeed, and that a man's hopes and dreams and aspirations were in reality the most splendid and glorious things in all the world.

At all of which the man of course only became more cynical than ever and said, "Well, now, it really is rather amusing to know that these chemical reactions can take such a very complicated form, is it not?"

Now, if the man's friends had not been truly interested in his welfare, and did not believe in him thoroughly, they

must have soon given him up as a bad job.

But they were not that kind at all.

They believed that deep down in everyone's heart, no matter how sodden and depraved that heart might be, was a spark of something fine, noble, beautiful. So instead of abandoning hope they took counsel together secretly and said, "The reason this man is so cynical about life is because he has never really lived. Until a man has suffered deeply he cannot be expected to realize the sacredness of human emotion. Therefore, we must find some way to make him suffer deeply, and then he will immediately understand all that we have been telling him. Some great sorrow must overtake this man. Behold, he must be made to weep!"

And all his friends thereupon set out to find a way to make the man who was cynical weep. For, as they truly said, it is impossible for one to glimpse the vision of the rainbow of happiness except through the mist of human tears.

Yet, though they all set out on their mission with the greatest zeal, they soon realized that it was going to be next to impossible to accomplish their design; and though they were not the kind to become easily discouraged, more than one began to feel that it would be no use, for the man who was cynical absolutely refused to weep.

Then, just as they had almost all given up hope, the unexpected, the marvelous, the miraculous happened.

The man's best friend died suddenly in the night.

And in the morning the man who was cynical and could not be made to weep, began weeping very sorely indeed, so that his tears ran down onto the floor and out into the street and even into the gutters. And all his friends came

quickly to his house with joy. For, they said, "Now, at last, is the man who was so cynical weeping. Surely though he is very unhappy, he will yet be very happy again; for at last is he glimpsing through the mist of human tears the vision of the rainbow of human understanding. Behold, our friend will never be cynical any more."

And they came unto him where he sat weeping and comforted him and said, "Weep no more, Brother, for though you are unhappy for a moment yet will you be very happy again. And your joy will be even as the joy of angels, for at last you have suffered and have lived."

Then the man who was cynical and was weeping for his friend got up from his chair and said, "Well, now, I have really wept some tears at last, haven't I? But nevertheless I am still convinced, as I have told you many times before, that human life is only mud which has somehow become active, and that all your dreams and visions and aspirations are just common chemical reactions which today are and tomorrow are no more. And now I will prove to you that I am right."

And the man who was cynical went to his cupboard and took down a little glass bottle and held it up so that all his friends could see it. And in the bottle were several drops of a white transparent fluid.

"Here," said he, "are some of my tears which I have wept this morning and caught in this bottle. Well, now, I have examined them all very carefully and I find that they are absolutely nothing but common salt water!"

And the man who was cynical smiled, and all his friends departed slowly from his house for not one of them had anything to say.



# THE FIFTY-THOUSAND-DOLLAR PARAGRAPH

By Henry Altimus

A WILL is scarcely a document in which you or I would be likely to look for fresh and original humor, yet society found in John Wentworth's last will and testament a most unexpected source of amusement. For two years it was the occasion for frivolous conversation and sly and witty exchanges, but at the end of that time it suddenly dropped out of the conversation of mixed company, for quite abruptly it had taken on a lewd and indecent character which made it very precarious as a subject for drawing-room humor.

It was a singular will. Wentworth's daughters alone took it seriously—and, after a fashion, so did their husbands.

Nature had very manifestly meant John Wentworth to be a happy man. It had given him a sound body, an easy conscience, a good income, and considerable and impressive bulk underneath his waistcoat. But Wentworth had made one mistake in his otherwise well-considered progress in life: in courting the woman he was to marry, he also courted the hazards of progeny.

Wentworth had pondered this problem in advance, as he pondered all problems in advance, and he had settled it to his satisfaction that it was within his power to breed and bring up very fine children. He was physically very sound, and so was his wife, and they were both mentally and spiritually well endowed. There was nothing intimidating in the prospect.

Wentworth had judged correctly. His two daughters had come into the world sound of body and mind. But

they were the homeliest girls that ever blighted a fond father's hopes.

Wentworth was not an inordinately vain man. He knew that he was not very handsome himself and he had no illusions about the plainness of his wife; but, with the unthinking vanity of most prospective parents, he had taken it for granted that his children would be goodlooking.

With the approach of the birth of his first child, Wentworth's nature softened marvelously. He pictured himself in the rôle of a loving father, and saw himself kissing the rosy little thing's toes with hearty "Yum-yums," and listening to approving friends' exclamations over the beauty of the infant. He expected that it would be a pretty baby. It was only natural that he should expect that. A blatant, yawning, newborn babe comes into the world with little enough to recommend it, and it is only just to expect that it bring with it a fair degree of beauty, or at least the promise of it, so that one can love it in spite of its bad habits.

But the first sight of his daughter Mildred made Wentworth's heart sink, and he fled the house in anguish and despair. She was the ugliest little thing he had ever set his eyes on. For a long time he could not believe that she was really his child. He felt that someone had played a nasty trick on him. He was angry with his wife, angry with the infant, angry with himself; but, above all, he was angry with his friends because of their tactful and hypocritical enthusiasm about the newcomer.

He didn't get over it quickly or easily. Ugly little Mildred remained as a per-

manent accusation against his success, his taste, his judgment. He was absolutely disheartened, but, though he never admitted, he came, after a time, to find consolation in the current belief that homely children grow up to be handsome adults.

But the advent of a second daughter, if anything uglier than the first, took the heart out of Wentworth completely. Mildred was two years old at the time, and her features had by then assumed a promise of permanent and unrelieved ugliness which left no room for even the faintest hope for the future.

Wentworth was a greatly altered man after that. By nature sanguine and cheerful, he became the sulkiest of pessimists. Where once he spent his leisure moments sucking at aromatic cigars, he now spent the better part of the day biting at the ends of his mustache and ruminating on the futility of life. He neglected his business, neglected himself, and, above all, neglected Mildred and Gwendolyn with a shameless and resolute neglect.

Fortunately, their mother did not find in their ugliness any cause for loving them the less, and she gave them her unselfish and unsparing devotion, but she died when they were still little girls, and after that they were left to bring themselves up as best they could. For Wentworth would have nothing to do with them. He felt they had abused his confidence, shamed his pride, insulted his parenthood, and the children grew to girlhood and womanhood without having won as much as their father's friendship.

Resignation would have ill become the hulk of John Wentworth. He wasn't resigned. He sulked in solitude, growled at everything and everyone, and acted like a man with a grudge who would some day have his revenge. He grew accustomed to disliking his girls, but he never forgave the rest of the world for disliking them. He wanted no sympathy for himself, but he thought the men and women of the set in which he once mingled might show

more kindness and forbearance toward his daughters.

But, as time went by, it became obvious that society had no intention to take his daughters to its bosom, and, though the girls were now approaching the brink of thirty, not a single young man in the city had showed them a kindness or paid them a compliment. All of which incensed Wentworth beyond all reason, and he became more and more resolved to make society regret its neglect.

He never achieved his purpose during his life. Evidently he had been unable to conceive a satisfactory way to gratify his grudge against society. But his death had been his opportunity. By his will he put into operation a plan which he hadn't the hardihood to carry out while he lived.

When it was made public soon after his death, society was considerably surprised to find that Wentworth had died not nearly as well off as they had imagined him to be. He was able to provide only a modest annuity for each of his daughters. But there was one large item—\$50,000, an impressive figure in a will cluttered with paltry bequests to charity and domestic servants—the disposition of which was made the chief feature of the document.

Many a cup of coffee went cold the morning on which the contents of the will were published in the newspapers while the unique paragraph, carefully worded in the most precise but involved legal manner, was read, reread, discussed, and interpreted at society's breakfast table.

Put into the simplest language, the paragraph in question provided that \$50,000 be deposited with a reliable trust company and turned over, with accumulated interest, to the first grandchild to be born to John Wentworth, deceased.

## II

It had been a dull season socially. There had been no intrigues, no elope-

ments, and few scandals to provide material for really smart conversation of the type on which society thrives, and so the Wentworth will came as a blessed gift from Heaven. Society pounced upon it, capitalized it, grew hilarious about it, and lucky were the hostesses whose teas and dinners and dances were scheduled after the date of the publication of the will. They were unqualified successes.

If Wentworth had meant to pull the wool over society's eyes, he failed utterly. The "\$50,000 paragraph," as it came to be known, deceived no one. It was obvious to the meanest capacity that it was a bold, though covert, bid for a husband for one or both of the homely Wentworth girls.

Their father, to mask his real intention, had tried to make it appear that he was anxious only to perpetuate the family name.

It was a clever trick, but hardly clever enough to deceive any one.

Society, however, though it plumed itself on its perspicuity, had failed to divine the real motive behind Wentworth's plan. It was true enough that he had offered the \$50,000 as bait for a husband for one of his daughters, but the marrying-off of his daughters concerned him very little. He was too indifferent about them to care whether they ever married. He cared little about the perpetuation of the family name. But he was inflexibly determined to satisfy his grudge against society, and his will was designed to execute this single purpose. Society, by its neglect of the Wentworth girls, had shown its intention to make their existence Wentworth's own private misfortune. It had no desire to take any of the burden upon itself. And Wentworth had made up his mind that he would force his daughters upon society and make them a common misfortune. By getting them married he would shift the burden he had borne alone for so many years to the unwilling shoulders of his neighbors. He would weave his daughters inextricably into the social fabric as an ugly and everlasting blem-

ish. It was the vengeance of an embittered and unresourceful man.

But society did not divine this purpose, and unwittingly it allied itself with Wentworth to carry out his design. It saw in his will only a shrewd but obvious trick to entrap a mercenary son-in-law, and they entered into the spirit of the thing, merely for the fun they would get out of it, with a hearty purpose.

Immediately after the death of their father, the Wentworth girls suddenly came into a belated but overwhelming popularity. They were most zealously courted by hostesses who hitherto had seemed to be utterly unaware of their existence. They were invited to every function on the social calendar, and wherever they went they were made much of, overwhelmed with attentions, flattered, courted, spoiled, invited to come again. They were thrown into the society of the marriageable men of their set, they were praised in lavish terms in their very presence, and whenever a youth tarried in their vicinity for a moment he immediately found himself alone with them.

The Wentworth girls alone took their unaccustomed popularity in all seriousness. They saw in it an intention on the part of remorseful society to make up for its past indifference, and they attributed everyone's kindness and attentiveness to a genuine sympathy for their parentless and unfortunate condition. They enjoyed their popularity. They felt they were beginning to live at last.

They did not suspect that society was merely amusing itself. It was having an immense amount of fun at their expense. It was all a huge joke, a merry and fantastic hoax. Wentworth had laid a trap for one of their number and they were eager to see who would fall into it. They were even willing to guide him into the jaws of the trap merely for the fun of seeing him caught. It was a great game. It was as though they were dancing madly and merrily around a puddle of mud, waiting to see which of their number would tumble into it.

and ready to burst into a jolly uproar at the sight of the bedraggled and bespattered victim.

It was capital sport. Months went by, and Wentworth's trap, in spite of the collusion of almost every hostess in the city, failed to ensnare a victim. But society was not disappointed. The suspense, in fact, added to the general merriment. It continued unabated for a long time, until, as was said before, the situation unexpectedly assumed a lewd and forbidding character which made it highly indelicate for society to go on with its jest.

It put society completely out of countenance!

From the day of the double wedding of the Wentworth sisters, at the mere mention of their name in mixed company, young women blushed, staid matrons grew visibly nervous, and men found it necessary to turn and blow their noses rather noisily.

### III

THE turn of events was as unforeseen as it was shocking.

And it all came from the fact that Wentworth had two daughters and not one—a very manifest fact, it would seem, of which everyone was well aware, but no one had been keen enough to anticipate the consequences of it.

One morning, about a year after Wentworth's death, the best families of the city were startled to read in their morning papers an announcement of the engagement of Gwendolyn Wentworth, the younger of the girls, to one Mason Miller.

To say that they were startled is putting it inadequately.

They were offended.

They were almost indignant.

Who was this Mason Miller?

He was not of their set.

They had never heard of him.

They had never had any indication of his existence.

His name was utterly unknown to them.

Their indignation grew as they con-

templated the new turn of things. They felt that they had been cheated, that the Wentworth girls had taken advantage of them, that they hadn't played the game fairly. And now it looked as if all their sport was going to be spoiled.

They set about making inquiries about the marplot newcomer.

Mason Miller was twenty-eight, thin, pale, deliberate, ambitious. The one irremediable sorrow of his life was that he wasn't born rich, and the one aim of his life was to repair the oversight of Providence. But he was easily discouraged, and he considered himself a failure at the time of life when most men are just getting started.

His moribund hopes were revived when he met the Wentworth girls. He had come East from Chicago in quest of wealth, bringing with him a letter of introduction to the Wentworths. The friend who had given him the letter had been overcautious in preparing him for the unattractiveness of the girls, and it lay neglected in his desk for a long time. Some months after the death of the father, however, and after the publication of the will, he called on the girls.

Miller was not a sentimental youth. He had contemplated the situation dispassionately. He knew he could never be born rich no matter how long he lived, but he could, after a fashion, procure the vicarious sensation of being born rich—that is, his son could inherit the wealth he had missed so much. And, before he paid his visit, he had already determined to marry one of the girls.

He called several times, giving both sisters his unprejudiced attention, and finally, after a long enough time to make it appear that his choice had been arranged by forces beyond his control, he began to concentrate on Gwendolyn, the younger of the two. She was a frail, blonde, timid little thing in spite of her years, easily moved to tears and easily led. Mildred was stern, dark, severe, caustic, and inclined to be very stubborn. Miller's mind was made up

long before he made evident his preference.

And so they became engaged.

Such were the facts as society obtained them. And disheartening they were in the extreme. There was nothing romantic or ridiculous in the circumstances, and there was nothing in Miller's direct and honest ambition to provide further matter for amusement. And so society dropped the Wentworth girls and the Wentworth episode, regretting that such a precious morsel should have been snatched out of their mouths. There was no more fun to be had out of it. They were through.

But their indifference was not destined to last long.

Things were so shaping themselves in the Wentworth household as to revive their interest in even a livelier measure than before—to make them take up the course of the sisters with the prospect of even madder amusement, only to drop the episode abruptly and finally as too gross for their purposes.

#### IV

ONE afternoon soon after the engagement of Gwendolyn and Mason Miller, the sisters were taking tea alone. Gwendolyn seemed more than usually preoccupied. At length she set down her cup and clasped her hands in her lap.

"Darling," she said to Mildred, "Mason wants to arrange for the wedding. We spoke about it last night. He doesn't believe in long engagements. I told him I would speak to you."

Mildred made no reply. She merely turned her head and looked out of the window.

Gwendolyn rose and sat down on the arm of her sister's chair. She assumed that she was trying to think of a convenient date, and she affectionately stroked her hair while she waited.

Presently, however, she heard Mildred catch her breath, saw her lift her hands to her face, and then lower her head until it lay in her lap, her shoulders convulsed with sobs.

Gwendolyn slipped to her knees on the floor and caught her sister's head in her hands, raising it till it was close to her own face and gazing into her tear-filled eyes.

"What is it, Mildred?" she asked, deeply moved. "What is it, dearest?"

But Mildred did not reply, allowing her head to sink into her lap again.

Then a deep flush came into Gwendolyn's cheeks. Her eyelids trembled, and she placed her arms tenderly about her sister's shoulders.

"Mildred, dearest," she whispered, her voice quiveringly low, "do you—do you love him?"

Even before the shrinking of her sister's shoulders told her so, Gwendolyn knew that her question was absurd. She realized it as soon as the words were out of her mouth, but she could not resist the temptation to ask it. Whether it was true or not, it suddenly, however briefly, gave the situation a tensely dramatic quality which lifted her barren life out of the monotony through which it had dragged for nearly thirty years. She knew that she had been absurd, but nevertheless the question had made her feel for a moment that her drab life had had at least the possibility of tragic romance. And for this reason, more than out of sympathy for her sister, she was moved to silent tears. She was almost happy, and she was overwhelmed with affection for her sister.

"Tell me, dearest," she kept repeating. "Tell your sister."

"Oh, it isn't fair. It isn't fair," sobbed Mildred, shaking her head in grief.

For a time Gwendolyn was puzzled. Then she understood. She caught the meaning of Mildred's protest. She knew that it was her marriage to which she referred. She understood that it would be unfair, that it would ruin her sister's chances, that, by appropriating the \$50,000 bequest for herself, she would condemn Mildred to a solitary spinsterhood from which she herself had been saved.

"Never mind, dearest," said Gwen-

dolyn at length, deeply stirred, "I'll wait."

And she did wait. She waited for months.

Then there appeared on the scene a taciturn, dignified, unknown Englishman. Because he came from a foreign country, he was able to pretend that he brought with him an ideal of womanhood which differed very greatly from the ideal that prevailed in this country. He was able to persuade Mildred that his ideal was beautiful, manly, spiritual, and that she approached that ideal as closely as it was humanly possible. And, after a time, they became engaged.

It was at this point that society resumed its interest in the Wentworths. The episode had assumed a new aspect and a new promise.

Of all the persons concerned, Mason Miller alone was unhappy over Mildred's engagement. He was more than unhappy—he was decidedly disgruntled. He despised the Englishman. He saw in him an illegitimate and sordid contender, and he saw in the engagement a design to wreck his plans and rob him of his spoils. He felt that he had been shamefully ill-treated. He would have liked to protest, to show the crafty Briton up. But instead he spoke to Gwendolyn about getting married at once.

He had been anticipated, however.

When Gwendolyn consulted her sister and informed her that Mason had expressed a desire for an early marriage, Mildred beamed happily.

"Oh, lovely, lovely!" she exclaimed. "We've decided on an immediate marriage too. And we will make it a double wedding!"

Gwendolyn was delighted. She brought the news to Miller when he called that evening. She was surprised to see him scowl darkly.

He left very early, without even touching his hand to hers.

He was disgusted.

He wanted to wash his hands then and there of the whole business. But he had gone too far for that, and he

ended with a grim decision to see it through.

The wedding took place soon after. It was a quiet and not very successful affair, for the bridegrooms didn't seem to get on together at all.

Up to the time of the wedding the Wentworth episode gathered interest from day to day. Society nibbled at it, smacked its lips over it. It was like a bit of toast that could be warmed over and over again and always remained crisp and delicious.

But when the double wedding took place, the name of Wentworth was promptly deleted from all social conversation, and the word "censored" was writ large over the uncomfortable silence which followed any rash and indiscreet approach to the name.

Society has a decided relish for the risqué. It is clever enough and versatile enough to make it appear naughty without being vulgar. But the most resourceful and dexterous exponent of clever drawing-room dialogue could not broach the subject of the Wentworth episode without the danger of becoming insufferably common. It had become an unseemly and impossible subject.

But that did not banish it from the conversation of unmixed groups. Amongst themselves, the women often ventured covert and seemingly innocent remarks, and only the careful social schooling to which they had been submitted saved them on more than one occasion from bursting into gross merriment.

But the men got the most fun out of it. They were shameless, unrelenting in the lengths to which they pursued the jest, daringly ribald in their hilarity. And it got worse as time went by. They went to indelicate extremes. And when one of the men recommended the situation as a good sporting opportunity for some lively betting, at even money, it became simply demoralizing.

The months went by. When the Wentworth sisters appeared in public they were the objects of a cautious but close interest on the part of everyone. When they were seen on the street they

were the focus of narrow scrutiny, and when they passed by there was much whispering.

But a year passed and no heir had been born to the Wentworth fortune.

Society grew timid even in its private speculation.

Two years passed; and even the men grew meticulous.

Three years passed.

Four years.

Five years. . . .

It must be obvious to the reader that it is impossible to go on with this chronicle of the Wentworth family. At a certain point, society became severely unaware of the situation, and it became a mark of the grossest taste to refer to the Wentworths except in the most impersonal and dispassionate manner.

It remains necessary only to introduce the reader to a conference in the private office of a well-known lawyer some years later. The lawyer is seated at a long table and he is reading from a typewritten sheet. Seated opposite him are two gray-haired, meek, silent old ladies, listening with an air of sad resignation. Beside them are two elderly gentlemen, tedium and disillusionment written in their countenances. They do not seem to be on very good terms, looking up at each other now and then in a distinctly hostile manner, and nodding their heads from time to time indifferently as the reading goes on.

And the document that is being read has to do with the assignation to charitable purposes of a certain \$50,000.



## A SYRIAN NIGHT

By Clinton Scollard

**B**ELOVED, this I would bring back to you,—  
A night of silvery calm,  
And etched upon a sky of purple-blue  
One lonely palm;

A star like a fire-opal high above;  
A fountain's murmurings;  
And, tuned to a sweet melody of love,  
Soft zither strings;

The sense of being far, so far apart  
In some enchanted zone;  
And the ecstatic throbbing of your heart  
Against my own!



**E**XTRAVAGANCE:—Spending money on your own wife.



## CONFESSTION

By Marion De Caroule

**H**E came. And I knew that for the first time in my life I had found true love!

My conviction was strengthened by a curious quickening of the pulse, a delicious joy at this adoring glances, a warm and responsive glow at his touch and a new thirst for his kisses.

With the unquenchable enthusiasm of youth I shared with him this strange new love discovery..

No false modesty checked my adoration of his finest points, eyes, teeth, hands and brow.

No absurd coyness thwarted my frank pleasure as he thrilled me with his deep rich voice.

No maidenly reserve prevented my openly expressed admiration of his graceful form clad in bathing attire.

I love him! And in loving, gave all.

And I would have believed myself, but that all my affairs begin in this same crazy worshiping manner.



## UNFAITH

By Margaret Widdemer

**Y**ou hid the love in your eyes—  
How could you think I knew?  
It was only a step to his comforting  
From the hurt of you.

For even a woman's eyes  
Grow tired of tears—  
It was so long a way to look  
Down the naked years.

And I had rest from heartbreak,  
And I had peace from pain—  
Why do you have the love in your eyes  
Again, again?



# THE INCORRIGIBLE MALE

By Maurice Lazar

THEY met on the balcony of the south wing of the Art Institute, looking southward over the lake.

She had been bending over the ugly stone balustrade, fascinated by the expanse of sky and water, when he sauntered into her quietude. There was no talk; merely the most casual appraisal of, by, one another, and then swift, sly scrutinies. His attentions soon disturbed her; so confident and careless they were, so gentlemanly-curious. Nevertheless she remained, standing by the railing, calm, seemingly indifferent, a bit superior. And there he was, staring. . . .

Her figure was slender, above the average in height, the waist straight and small, the eyes clear—every salient feature at ease. A certain grace in her poise interested him immediately, trained as he was to the appreciation of beauty in the female physique. Her head, it is true, was small in proportion to the height of her, but well-shapen. It was her face that drew and held his attention. A serio-comic expression of the small mouth and the eyes suggested successful experiences with the usual details of human conduct. In fact, she was not very young, nor quite ah—middle-aged. Oh, rather interesting, he thought.

She became restive just as he conjectured her age, and, turning suddenly, moved into the corridor. He, silly man, not even stopping to realize what he was about to do, followed her down the wide stairway to the street. He hovered a few yards back while she tightened the long white gloves about her wrists, and then moved cautiously forward.

He told himself that he was an adventurous chap as he boarded the same north-bound street-car; and he seated himself opposite to her. Then he sat straight up, acutely embarrassed. She was trying hard not to betray her amusement. *Exactly!*

Mentally kicking himself for an ass, in having so obviously pursued this Person of Grace, and in such vulgar street-fashion, he decided to bear with his discomfort for a moment or two, and leave the car later on.

From time to time he glanced at her, always to find a smile in her eye and about her mouth; a fine, sensitive, humorous mouth it was. And then Two Bricklayers entered the car, very drunk, the smell of them casting a mephitic quality into the atmosphere. Both clutched at hanging straps. Bricklayer Number One accidentally trod on the foot of his colleague. Number Two howled sharply in his pain, and swore. He said—he . . . I may not repeat what he said. But it was horrible!

Now, an allusion to the possible disreputableness of one's mother and also one's present occupation is enough to start the most righteous of wars. Here it resulted in a one-sided fist-fight. For our gallant pursuer, addressing himself, quietly and nervously, to the injured Number Two, deplored with much sentiment the candid public use of profanity; especially with ladies present, etc. And the blow he received upon his nose brought with the maddening pain an introduction to the lady herself.

When she and he had alighted from the car, all of which I have saved my-

self the trouble of recording by placing above the row of dots, she cooed over him in a manner that should have repaid, in part, the humiliation he suffered.

"Are you hurt?" she asked again.

"N-no, that is, not much; ridiculous, the whole thing." And he stopped mumbling for a moment as she applied her scented handkerchief to the bruise.

"What a shame!" And she pushed him into the radiated light of a lamp-post to see more clearly the state of the injury. "Well," she added, "I live only a few streets away, and I'll walk." Pause. "Those men *were* brutes. And I thank you."

As she turned away, he held out a restraining hand.

"Please, may I not see you—home?"

"I need no escort." The tone was formality itself.

"Yes, yes, I know! After following you, as I did—"

"—I was not aware—"

"—you must, you cannot regard me as a gentleman!"

"Does it matter?" She was very impatient.

"But really . . ." He wanted to say something that would be appropriate, but for the life of himself could think of nothing except the fragrant odor of her handkerchief. (What a thrill for the eremitic man who regales himself with such feminine intimacy!)

"Young man," said she, very stern, "if you want my advice, let the matter rest. I do! Why—" and she raised the brim of her hat, "don't you see what an old staid person I am?" And she had to laugh. For he had removed his hat, stupidly, in response to the respect evoked by her gray hairs.

"My name," she also said, "is Mrs. So-and-so, and I live at—but, after all, your nose *is* bleeding. I'll tell you: come with me. I've something will draw out the inflammation."

In silence they traversed the empty streets, and in silence they were deposited on the sixth floor of an apartment-building, from the lift. She familiarly inserted her key in a door, opened it and stepped in with a slight gesture of invitation. He moved in, gingerly, and heard the door close behind him.

The room was bright and comfortable. Seated at a small table was a large, handsome man. He arose gravely, and advanced a step or two.

"Hubert, this gentleman was hurt by two ruffians in the car, for stopping them from swearing in my presence. And I thought it right to—"

Hubert shook our pursuer's hand, powerfully. "Hurt?"

"Not very much; my name is John Phillips."

"Mine's Kendall. Pleased indeed! And I *do* thank you."

A maid entered, and the lady addressed her.

"Bring a poultice of—"

Another woman came into the room.

"My daughter," said the lady, "Mr. Phillips."

They shook hands.

The young man realized a degree of resemblance, in her features, to her mother. The daughter was indeed very pretty. He found himself holding her hand a trifle too long.

"I am glad," he said, "to know *you*, Miss Kendall."

She stared quizzically.

But she was a very beautiful creature. . . .



**K**ISSING a woman merely because you know she wants you to, is like scratching a spot that doesn't itch.

# THEY WENT IN SEARCH OF LOVE

By Cosmo Hamilton

I  
**H**E was utterly alone. His slight figure, well built but for a tendency to stoop, had become very familiar to the good people of Mountfair. Always alone, always scrupulously well dressed, he made his daily appearance, if fine, with the regularity of clockwork. The coloured gardeners, who attempted to tease the ever-falling leaves from the grass round the pleasant houses, told the time by him. Children who tricycled themselves red in the face along the narrow white strip of asphalt, mother-near to their homes, grew accustomed to his quiet, smiling, wistful passing, and wondered a little. The barking dog, whose egotism found incessant vent in a wagging tongue when mere man had the temerity to walk near his house, began to eye this recurring figure with something almost like tolerance. The postmen, with their blobby bags, shot him nods, and in time one or two tabby cats elevated their tails when they saw him coming, and gave him the time of day in the wheedling language of their kind.

In the town of Mountfair—quite a town this, if you please, with its thirty thousand inhabitants—his rather ascetic, clean-cut profile and grey-besprinkled hair, his kindly, grey eyes into which a smile came often, and his sensitive, sympathetic mouth were often the subject of shop conversation. He had a ready and even eager “Good-morning” for the conductors of the rasping yellow trolley-cars which passed so often, packed like sardine tins at night and in the

early morning; for the policemen who stood stolidly outside the brave, white municipal building with its fat pillars and pompous doorway, and round about the admirable station with its wide approach and steam-heated waiting-rooms, all duly tessellated; for the over-fat coloured lady in gamboge blouse who watched life from the shabby door of her paper-candy-shoe-shine store—hats ironed and cleaned; and for the proprietors of the many chemists’ shops, among whom he carefully divided his patronage in the matter of pipe-mixture and tooth paste, eau-de-quinine, and shaving soap.

If you had asked the managers and waitresses, bell boys and telephone attendants of the Mountfair Hotel what they thought of Mr. Barton G. White, you would have received the same answer, “Fine; he gives no trouble.”

And that, after all, was a very splendid reputation to obtain after a year’s residence in a place where the staff was frequently changed, and many little things were, in consequence, often none too smooth. But Barton White never complained; and if, which was seldom, irritability came upon him because the morning papers had not made their appearance, he took it with him along the road through the woods, to his favorite place perched high up above the town, and let the breeze blow it away.

He loved this quiet road. He liked to look at the great solid rock that bordered one side of it, the typical, inevitable rock which had, in a subtle sort of way, hardened and made determined those early pioneers who

had started a great country and a great race. It interested him to watch the spittle from the higher ground trickle down the surface of it, leaving marks as though mammoth snails had crawled there.

His walk through the woods in the spring, when the young birches and ashes and oaks were in their first joyous green, filled him with exhilaration and gladness, and almost brought a song to his lips. And even in the late autumn, when almost all the leaves had fallen, and lay crinkled, dry, and yellow under his feet, he found a sort of satisfaction about them. The trees had done their appointed job well and fitly, as they would do it again in due course. He liked that. It was good.

Always on the edge of the Mount he would sit, hatless, on the flat of a rock, and look out over the wide stretch of land beneath. Peppered with small, verandahed houses with different-coloured roofs, intersected by patches of trees which turned to purple before they bared themselves to winter, with here and there a towering factory chimney forever stammering smoke, it ran on to crowded Newark and to the Hudson. And on clear days, when the mist had dried, the faint Broddingnagian outline of the buildings of Manhattan grew against the sky, almost unearthly in their size.

At first, as a new man to the Mount, some twenty miles from New York, Burton White gazed at the faint outline of the wonderful, remorseless city, in which he had worked all his youth and some of his middle age, away with the eyes of the man who stops breathless and amazed to look back at some gigantic foe which he has overcome after a frightful struggle.

At first he sat up there alone and quiet and secure, smoking the good cigar that he had earned honestly and well, turned his eyes with a triumph and a sort of glee toward the monster city that had demanded twenty-

five of the best years of his life in return for retirement, with enough money to keep him in comfort for the rest of it. Sometimes he waved his hat at those faint, huge buildings, and laughed to know that he had escaped with a whole skin and a healthy brain.

But when he realized that he was perilously near fifty, neither young enough to take part in the strenuous exercises of the rising generation nor old enough to care to sit on the hotel verandah with the veterans and take part in conversation about the past; when it became painfully obvious that he stood like a fish out of water in the excellent hotel in which he had taken up his quarters, having no home, with a wistful desire to enjoy a kind of imitation home life, he began to look back at the distant city, all of whose clashing sounds of vivid struggling never reached as far as his quiet, reposeful retreat, not with the triumph of the conqueror, but the regret of one who missed and needed the exhilaration of competition.

There, at any rate, he had had his place, and was known as a fairly successful man. He was a unit of some consideration, to whom his business friends stopped and spoke. But there, in Mountfair, perched up above the small, increasing town, among the woods and rocks, out of touch with life, out of reach of the great octopus arms of the city he knew so well, he was no one. He counted for nothing. He was an onlooker, observed casually only by coloured gardeners' and other men's children, tradespeople, policemen, trolley conductors, dogs, and cats.

For twenty-five years he had enjoyed the comfort of home life, and had worked to provide his mother with much more than the mere necessities. When she died he retired to live on the interest of the money that he had saved, and had gone, unconsciously, in search of love. He wanted, once more, to be needed. He wanted, once more, and now more ea-

gerly and poignantly, for some one person who should listen for his step and put her arms about his neck, to whom he could whisper "I love you, you are mine!"

## II

AND then Miss Eleanor Parker Stretton came to live at the Mountfair Hotel.

At first she slipped into the daily routine almost unnoticed, a quiet, shy woman about whose dress there were still the signs of mourning. She was given a small table in one of the corners of the large dining-room, whose big windows caught all the sun, and whose polished floor had paths of green carpet. And here, day after day, always alone, always with studious punctuality, she took her meals—breakfast after the business men had left grumpily for New York, luncheon when the large tables near the windows were surrounded by children, and those elsewhere by the elderly men and women just returned from a little walk in the grounds, if fine, or mild exercise, if wet, up and down the glassed-in verandah with its lure of bright yellow rocking-chairs and boxes of geraniums. In due time she was discussed and considered by the gossips in the place. That goes without saying. A past was duly manufactured for her in the usual way—a present and a future as well. It was gathered that she was in possession of fairly comfortable means, from the fact that she had a sitting as well as a bed room, and that she bought the latest novels from the bookstore in the town. Also because she had three dinner gowns and five day dresses, and because the chambermaid told the private maid of the lady with five daughters, who told everybody else as quickly as she could, that she had eight pairs of shoes. She was not homogeneous. She did not foregather in the hall or between meals. She walked alone and then retired to her rooms. Over-

tures were made for the purpose of finding out her story—she obviously possessed a story—but were quietly eluded. And when it was finally agreed that Miss Stretton "must have been very pretty once," she was left alone.

And yet, like Barton White, Eleanor Parker Stretton, having no home, had gone to the Mountfair Hotel with a wistful desire to find something approaching home-life there. For she, too, was utterly alone. And she, too, with more than half her life behind her, needed to be needed, because she, too, had known the blessing of having been needed, and being needed no longer left a great gap in her life and a hollow place in her heart.

From the age of fifteen she had been housekeeper, companion, sun meter, optimist to her father, a hard-working doctor in Brooklyn. To him she had gladly, eagerly devoted all the best years of her life, and when he died she stood alone, quite utterly alone, in this big callous, busy world, to make a new life in new surroundings amid new faces, but always with the same old hollow in her heart. She was forty-three, and her hair was very grey in places, and her head was very full of dreams that had never come true. The little house, the devoted husband, the young, rushing children, where were they?

Instead, she had a nice income from the hardly won savings of her good and charitable father; she had her books that so often awoke her regrets; she had her cheery little sitting-room with its angular hotel furniture and telephone, and gurgling steam-heater, and three evening gowns, five day dresses, and eight pairs of shoes.

Life is, however, very just in the matter of compensation. Romance, just a little touch of romance, was provided to this romanceless woman by Providence, who now took a sudden, small interest in her.

From the moment that she saw

Barton White standing aloof upon the steps of the verandah with the morning sun upon his clean-cut profile and loneliness stamped upon his broad forehead, a thrill, a new and curious thrill, seemed to electrify her heart and bring into the hitherto monotonously quiet, empty day a new interest. But not for all her little fortune could she bring herself to give even so much as a distant good-morning to the man who passed her table three times a day to go to his own in a distant corner, who so frequently paced up and down the glassed-in verandah where she sometimes sat and pretended to read so that she might watch the children, and who many times stood bare-headed in the elevator when she was on her way up or down.

Sometimes she imagined that she caught his wistful eyes upon her, but always, she told herself, that he must be looking at the pretty anaemic girl in the broad waistband who sat just behind her. Sometimes she was almost certain that he came towards her intending to speak, but as he always passed in silence she was obliged to assure herself that she was wrong.

But she wasn't wrong. She was very far from being wrong. Barton White would have given a year of his life to have had the courage to make friends with this sister in loneliness, to have been able to give and to receive some of the sympathy without which men and women must go thirsty through life; to have been able to exchange ideas, share walks, read the same books and feel that there was one person, just one, who was glad at his approach and who would lay a flower on his grave when he was called.

But her shyness was contagious, and the touch of mourning that was on her face as well as in her clothes made him fearful in intruding; and so several weeks went by and neither spoke, and neither guessed that each, in the fastnesses of lonely rooms, re-

hearsed little formal openings and phrases in the matter of weather and the tone of leaves and the state of politics, and neither dreamed that each woke in the morning with a new sense of interest and expectation, and the same feeling of relief at meeting, although wordlessly, in the hall.

But Providence, now alert, did not intend to be put out by such proceedings. He put Miss Eleanor Stretton to bed one day with a slight attack of the influenza, and then, in all confidence, went upon his much required way. He had, as he knew, every reason to be confident. The moment Barton White heard that the doctor had been called in to attend to Miss Eleanor Stretton, he set off hurriedly to the town, bought a great bunch of flowers and a dozen magazines, returned by the trolley, was fortunate enough to meet the doctor on his way to his hard-worked car, and asked after the patient.

"Oh, nothing to worry about, sir. A touch of influenza. We'll soon have her up and around again."

With what relief and thankfulness did this shy man, now lover, hurry upstairs to the invalid's floor to find the chambermaid.

"These flowers to Miss Stretton with my compliments and best wishes for a speedy recovery," he said, and went.

Now it happened that the chambermaid was young and brisk, and that she had noticed these two lonely people. All her national sentiment and spirit of romance flamed up, and this was the message that she delivered to the feverish lady:

"Mr. Barton White sends ye this bouquet with his dear love, ma'am, and he hopes to heaven that ye'll very soon bring the beautiful face downstairs again."

### III

AND in this oddly comic-pathetic way these two strangers, who found the world as large and empty and unre-

sponsive as the room in which a young child is shut up alone, came to be friends. The illness and the flowers, and more than both the sentimental, kindly Irish chambermaid, broke the ice. And daily all three of them widened the crack, because every day Barton White bought and sent in flowers, and every day the Irish girl altered and coloured the message.

Not since the awful hour that Death laid his hand on the shoulders of the over-tired man, who had waged a long war against him for other people's sake, had this woman been so happy. Illness was a blessing in disguise, and the scent of those daily gifts was filled with something that made her heart sing and her eyes bright and the world very beautiful. On the second day she wrote a short note of thanks to the man who had brought love into her life. It was a little formal, a little frightened, but it began cordially and ended very sincerely.

It took Barton White three hours to answer it, and at the end of that time he did not dare to read the closely written sheets to see what he had had the courage to say. There was nothing in them that called for timidity. He had merely told her all the news of the hotel as he had gathered it as a silent looker-on, and described, with a nice touch of humour, the effects of the turning leaves. Unconsciously he had slipped, here and there, into autobiography, and given her a brief peep into his kindly nature and starved sympathy. It was a quite charming effort.

And that was the beginning of the daily letters that passed between these two, letters that warmed up gradually until Barton White wrote "I love you," and Eleanor Stretton replied, "I love you."

But when the doctor's car ceased to come honking round the drive, and it became known that Miss Stretton was well again, people asked themselves why it was that she remained

in her rooms and had her meals sent up.

Barton White asked himself that question also. Only the Irish chambermaid knew the reason, and, placed upon her honor to say nothing, she held her tongue. It was an heroic effort, because never had she longed to tell the other servants anything so much as she longed to tell the strange things that were going on in Nos. 20 and 21.

But were they, under the circumstances, so very strange? Was it not very human, and therefore, perhaps, very foolish, for Miss Stretton to set herself eagerly to turn back the hands of the clock? Since the world began, men and women have endeavored to accomplish this impossible deed, and they will some time do so in one way or another so long as the old world wags. She was loved, and therefore she strove to do something to herself that would make her more attractive to the man who loved her.

Who could the two women be, then, who came up from the town to see her, carrying bags, other than the dressmaker and the hair-dresser? The one was required to render the three evening gowns and the five day frocks a little younger. The other came to "touch" Miss Stretton's greying hair—just to touch. The dresses were duly altered here and there. The primness was removed, the formality softened, and the hair, under the cunning fingers of the specialist, took on a warm red glow. Yes, red. The secret is out, the touch was the touch of henna!

And then another specialist arrived, a sort of clock repairer, too. This one set about putting back the hands with her own that were so soft and deft. She called it face massage, but it was something more than that, because a little blush was left on Miss Stretton's pale cheeks long after the woman had gone. The dressing table gleamed with dainty bottles of curious messes, one tiny round flat box of blush renewer, and a pencil.

Yes, a pencil, which when applied with care to the eyebrows made them more arched, a little thicker.

And when, one afternoon, with the blinds discreetly placed, Miss Stretton stood in a frock that clung fashionably to her ankles, the excited Irish girl was asked, after several roundabout questions, "How old do you think I look now, Mary?" the answer came at once: "Sure, an' ye don't look wan day over twenty-seven, ma'am—cross me heart and die if ye does."

Whereupon a new daisy showed its face upon the Blarney Stone, and Miss Stretton nearly wept.

And what of Burton White during these days?

Here was a man all excited and eager, who had declared his love and been accepted. Here were hours and even days going by, and the woman in whose hands lay his future happiness, that whole new and splendid future that was no longer to be killed in isolation, remained upstairs, although the doctor had gone and health had returned.

"Give me ten days," she had written, "ten days in which to regain all my strength and to think of all we mean to each other."

And for the first two of them he waited with sympathetic impatience. Every day he sent her flowers, and every day a letter, sometimes two. And when he passed up the road that led to his favorite woods, he built metaphorically for her and himself the most charming compact houses on eligible sites, each one with a different coloured roof, and at night he stood at the window of his lonely bedroom and thought that all the myriad lights of Mountfair and Newark quivered very friendly congratulations, having come out especially to celebrate the good and glorious change in his way of life.

On the third day he caught himself eying his face in his looking-glass. What a pity that his hair was so grey. What a pity!

If—if he were to—suppose that he, like many of the business men he had known—

After all, grey hair was not necessary.

There were applications, juices, even dyes—he might as well be frank—he had seen them advertised in papers and magazines. Why look old when he now felt so young?

This sentence became a sort of motif in the music of the breeze. For one whole day he listened to it, and refused to hear it. What was the ultimate use of interfering with nature? Nevertheless, how good it would be to appear before her when she came down, she who loved him, as he would have been if he had had the great good fortune to meet her ten years before!

The next morning he joined the business men in the hotel in the motor-'bus, and adventured over a patch of unbelievable road on to the trolley track and down hill through the town to the station, and so once more into the great city where all his active years had been spent in work, to which he had dedicated his youth and manhood to the tender service of a mother's needs.

Once more he came to the active, splendid river, alive with great steam ferries carrying human toll to the market place, and the fleet of small, sturdy tugs spurting up water with their blunt noses in the determined discharge of their duty. Once more he looked at the funnels of the great liners that rested silently and briefly in dock, waiting to transfer men and mails to England, France, and Russia.

Once more he stood in the streets of New York, with their multitudinous noises, beneath buildings whose lofty ambition led them skyward.

There might still be that man in the barber's shop in the basement of the Astor Hotel who had so often cut his hair and aired his views as to the chances of the giants of Yale or Harvard in the national game. To the

Astor he took a taxi. Hang expense; he was in love and he was loved! The two together spelled the nearest thing to heaven that man was permitted on earth. Yes, the man was there.

"Why, say," he said, and held out a cordial hand; and when the word "dye" was whispered, he added, "Sure, right now. Will you take off your collar?"

That night Barton White returned to the Mountfair Hotel too late for dinner. He felt that his hair was almost too brown, and he remembered that the lights in the dining-room were somewhat piercing. Also the eyes. He dodged the bell-boy who worked the elevator, and hurried upstairs. A chambermaid was sitting in the passage at the top, reading *The Evening Sun*. He gave her good-evening and a little shock. He saw it in the sudden cavity of her mouth, and he knew as he put the key into the lock of his door that his dye would be all over the hotel before morning. The bottle that had weighed so heavily in his pocket, wrapped in the printed directions, was placed in a drawer, beneath a pile of underclothing.

Barton White was afraid to look at himself in the glass. The barber has said that he looked as good as thirty-one and a half. All the way back White had been puzzling to find out why he had not said either thirty-one or thirty-two. Was there anything in the nature of ribaldy in that "one and a half?" After all, health had a good deal to do with the shade of a man's hair, and he was well. Then, too, happiness was good for hair, and he was very happy. So why should he worry?

But for several days he went out for long walks, after telephoning to the town for Eleanor's flowers, and writing his letter to Eleanor, and he took his meals away from the hotel. A change of diet was notoriously good for the digestion. Poor, dear Barton White! How little he knew of the ways of all such places as these

houses from home. His brown hair was already a stale joke!

And then, at last, the night came when he was able to say, "Tomorrow, tomorrow she comes." She had written a little quivering note asking him to meet her at eleven o'clock in the covered-in verandah.

He was glad that it was to be eleven o'clock. The men would have gone out to the city, the women to their rooms or out to the town, and the children would be in the grounds under the chocolate eyes of coloured nursemaids.

Half-past ten found him pacing, pacing on the linoleum between the yellow rocking-chairs and the boxes of geraniums. The sun of the Indian summer shone down warmly upon the glass. A clear blue sky gleamed behind the remaining brown leaves of the trees outside, and laughter came from the servants' quarters in the left wing of the house.

He heard a step, and turned.

His heart was in his mouth, his hat in his hand.

The unforgiving light fell upon his hair.

A few paces from the doorway stood—

He drew up short as the lady with the red locks and pink cheeks and ankle-tight skirt stopped as though turned to stone.

For several moments these two, who had not been content to let well enough alone, and who had both tinkered with the hands of the clock, stood looking. Neither recognized the other. Neither saw in this person the one who was loved and needed. It was unspeakably pathetic. Finally, with dreaded nervousness, they moved simultaneously, gave each other a hurried "Good-morning!" and passed.

#### IV

HALF an hour later Barton White was washing his head, feverishly, and up in her room, with the bitter tears

of humiliation in her eyes, Eleanor Stretton was removing the blush from her cheeks. It was no use. Anno Domini had hit them as it did everyone else, and had hit them very hard. "Good-morning!" Think of it! All that preparation and expense for a mutual "Good-morning!" All those priceless days wasted, their one touch of romance killed because of over-anxiety.

For the next few days both Barton White and Eleanor Stretton kept to their rooms. The one had severe indigestion, the other a slight recurrence of her complaint. The weather was so treacherous. But no flowers went up to No. 21, and no letters to No. 33. What went on in those rooms during these awful days no one knows. But in both grey gradually came back into two heads of hair, and with it a return to sense.

It was afternoon, with the sun setting all red behind the yellow leaves, when they came face to face again,

the same dear, elderly people that they had been before their wistful adventure backwards into a never-to-be-recovered youth. His hair was nearly white as he stood hatless before her, and her cheeks a little too pale as she met his eyes.

"My dear!" he said.

"Oh, my dear!" she answered.

"I did it for you," he said.

"And I for you," she answered.

"But I loved you as you were and are," he said.

"And I as I see you now," she answered.

"Thank God, you've come back!" he said.

"Thank God for you!" she answered.

And as he put his arms about her shoulders and his lips upon her cheeks there was a little sound as though someone were creeping away on tiptoe through the dead leaves. It might have been Providence.



## MY WIFE LACKS EMOTION

By John Hamilton

**I**T is maddening to live with a woman who never displays feeling.

My wife absolutely lacks emotion.

Her thoughts are colorless.

I am always as sure of what she will say as I am sure that tomorrow will follow tonight.

If I were killed and they should say: "A beautiful woman stabbed him because she loved him," she would answer:

"That is false."

"No beautiful woman would love him."

"He has a bald head and false teeth. . . ."

"Bring him in here, please."



## JOCASTA'S ROMANCE

By Julian Hawthorne

PHILIP was a half-breed Indian, his mother the daughter of a famous chief, his father a French-Canadian; he was serving the second year of a life sentence for murder in a Federal penitentiary.

He was now twenty-six; more than six feet, broad shouldered, light-footed, two hundred pounds of solid manhood; black hair, brilliant, commanding eyes, a winning smile.

His cell-mate was a bank clerk named Passavant, a man of forty, quiet and kindly. The two liked each other, and Philip told Passavant this story:

"I was fond of a girl on the reservation; the agent, Steve Maddox, meddled with her. One morning they found Steve with my knife through his heart, and said I did it. Well, I saw it done. A fellow had come down the trail from the mines, and he and Steve played poker for nuggets; Steve passed a card; the other fellow saw it, and grabbed my knife, which I'd just laid on the corner of the table after cutting my bit of plug, and killed him. Then he jumped on his pony, and that's the last I saw of him. Of course they said I did it. The judge was for hanging, but they commuted me to life. Maybe that fellow will own up some day."

"But," he added, with his frank smile, "if he hadn't done it, likely I might have; I had it in for Steve!"

Phil had petitioned Congress, written to the President, and friends were working for him—one friend in particular! Probably his appeals still lie in dusty pigeon-holes at the Department. This would not be written if Phil were alive. But documents could not convey the impression of the flesh-and-blood Phil—his noble bearing, the

flash of his eyes, the music of his utterance; and neither the Department nor the President ever saw or heard him.

Passavant inclined to believe his story, partly because of its improbability: it would have been so easy to invent a more plausible one. Other convicts who knew him knew also what courts and prisons are, and none of them believed that, innocent or not, Phil would ever get out; but they jollied him along; and hope, especially in lifers, dies hard. A human soul can hardly believe that any punishment can really be life-long. Only a firm heart or a cruel one could disturb this fool's paradise, and even prison guards have been known to foster the delusion.

On the wall of Phil's cell was a cabinet photograph of a young woman in festal attire: her face and figure were very beautiful, but the photograph seemed old and battered. Prisoners are not usually indulged with such privileges; but lifers are sometimes excepted.

From time to time, in intimate moods, Passavant heard the story of this photograph; Phil imparted it in his deep whisper, and also allowed his mate to read a bundle of letters from the photograph's original.

When, at his trial, life and death had hung in the balance for him, this beautiful woman, unknown to and unseen of him, had sat breathless and in tears in the courtroom. A year after his conviction she had written him her first letter, telling him this.

Passavant found her letters singularly impressive. They showed insight and imagination, and something else, which Passavant understood only after Phil had told him that she was a great prima

donna. That accounted for a touch in the letters which only the gift of art in a nature can supply. It justified too a fervor and independence of thought, an indifference to conventions, proper to a woman of noble lineage who had conquered the world by her own genius.

She was of foreign and patrician birth. Phil was a prince among his own people. She had personal knowledge of his heroic physical aspect. Perhaps a woman of her breed and race would not have been dismayed even had she believed him guilty; she would not flinch from bloodshed in a fair quarrel. But Phil had assured her as well as others of his innocence, and she had never questioned it.

The Indian nature, dealing with elemental passions, has a likeness to that of the ancient peoples of the Old World. The mutual attraction between these two persons was prompt and explicit, and was not affected by the fact that their letters must be censored by the prison authorities.

Her name was Jocasta Cenci. The Beatrice of history was her ancestor. Her letters told of her Roman birth; she had the title of Contessa, and an independent fortune, but art had called her from society to the stage.

There were more than twenty of her letters. It is not unusual for a sentimental girl, or for a woman of the world, tired of ordinary affairs, to seek novelty in a love intrigue with a convicted murderer. Even a great prima donna may seek in the depths for something missed on the heights. But this adventure of Jocasta's with the Indian proved as strange as her name.

Passavant noticed something odd about her handwriting; legible it was, but uneven, with an occasional tremulousness, such as strong emotion might produce. It suggested sex and temperament; but there was also a perplexing quality—a secret suggestion.

Only later did Passavant understand what that meant.

She had been the first of the two to speak of love.

"I have known men great and fa-

mous who loved and asked me," she wrote; "but I did not care. You are the man himself, as in the beginning, not made smooth and fine. You and I alike come to each other out of the darkness and terror. I freed myself by art and beauty: but they were not enough—why?—I saw you, and knew! I had wanted love! I have said it—I love you—I think you love me! To love is to be free. My love shall take you out of prison. We will be happy forever!"

Of Phil's first letters to the Contessa we know nothing; they were written for him by a former cell-mate, an amiable forger. But those dictated to Passavant have been preserved; and the amanuensis seems to have contrived to express in them something of the wild and powerful nature of Phil himself. In one of the last of these letters the subject of Phil's innocence is again touched upon, and the appalling wrong of keeping an innocent man behind the bars. It seems to have been intended that this letter should be the basis of another petition for pardon, to be presented by Jocasta herself. But, on the day after it was mailed, occurred the episode which threw all such plans into chaos.

## II

THE prisoners were forming in line in the yard, previous to marching to their several duties. In front of Phil stood little red-headed Dan Lyons, an irascible but warm-hearted Irishman. On this morning he had had a breakfast particularly vile; the hash not only smelt bad, but had a beetle in it. Dan was at odds with the universe. Phil, in a vein of teasing humor, took this untoward moment to whisper to him something especially exasperating.

Dan turned like a hornet, and before Phil could parry, stung him with several sharp blows in the face—and Dan, who had been in the ring, could hit hard. Phil's lip bled: he straightened up, and Dan, still wroth, made another rush at him.

Phil was taking the thing as a joke: he stooped suddenly and caught his advancing adversary by both ankles, swung him as one swings the hammer for the throw, and the next moment Dan was flying through the air, to land head first in the middle of Turpin, the fat guard, surliest and best-hated officer in the penitentiary. Turpin was knocked flat, Dan was partly stunned, and there lay both of them on the gravel.

Turpin, suffering in the solar plexus, sat up, and seeing Dan, hit him on the head with his club.

Then up stalked the Indian and said, "I threw him—you better hit me!"

Turpin rose with a grunt, and the two looked at each other.

There was a sparkle in Phil's eye that might have made one doubt his explanation of the murder charge against him.

Turpin, though a big man himself, and with the whole power of the United States behind him, saw the sparkle, and knew that if he made a move, Phil would kill him.

He gave a jerk with his head at last and forced a sneer.

"Go on to the Deputy's office," he said, pointing with his club.

The office was in the basement of the Isolation Building close by.

Phil smiled, turned leisurely, and walked across the sunlit space to the office door, Turpin following. They entered and were seen no more.

This was in July. At dinner that day the rumor circulated that Phil had been sent to the dark hole for one hundred days.

One hundred days!

The "dark holes" are underground cells in a corridor from which all light and as much air as possible are excluded. Occupants are chained to the door-posts with arms spread wide apart and above the head; at night one arm is loosed, and they can sink down to the floor; there is no cot, and the floor, of compacted filth, is alive with beetles. The daily menu is one thin slice of prison bread and a mug of water: as a

favor, sometimes three. If troublesome, the man is clubbed or otherwise assaulted; the guards are given *carte blanche* as to that. Three days in the dark hole is regarded as severe punishment; anything more than a month is often fatal. The arms and legs become paralyzed, the body is covered with sores and greatly emaciated; frequently the "patient" goes insane.

One hundred days for Phil! He was young and strong and full of spirit; but nobody expected ever again to see him alive. When it became known that his cell was the one through which the big hot-water pipe runs, and that Turpin was keeping it full-on every night, his funeral was looked for inside a week.

Upward of a hundred degrees in a stifling stench like that!

The mere thought of it made his fellow convicts turn white about the gills and cast their eyes down.

Of course there was no more writing or receiving letters.

### III

AFTER one hundred days, the young athlete, who had been light on his feet as a stag, was carried out of the dark hole by two men. One would have sufficed, for he weighed not over ninety pounds. His arms and legs were helpless; his body was a mass of foul sores. His head had a constant tremor.

Turpin ordered him under the cold shower.

He fainted under the operation.

One of the men muttered the phrase used in the prison to indicate discipline: "He's had the fear of God put in his heart all right!"

Turpin grinned.

"I learned him he can't assault an officer in this penitentiary and get away with it," he remarked. "Take him upstairs now and let the Warden have a look at him."

The Warden and the Doctor were chatting at the door of the front office.

"What's that? Oh, that Indian!" said the Warden.

He took a throat pastille, and con-

tempted the unconscious body, with his hands in his pockets.

"Is he dead, Doc?"

The Doctor, a handsome young man, neatly dressed, was examining his manicured finger nails.

He glanced at the culprit.

"He may hang on a few days yet; but you better let the carpenter make a box for him—he'll be ready this week. Take him to the hospital."

"What would be your diagnosis?" inquired the Warden.

"I guess acute indigestion will cover it," replied the other; and the two entered the office, smiling.

Passavant was admitted to see him next morning. A long skeleton lay on the white cot, a sheet over him to the neck. Dark, wrinkled skin covered the head; the closed eyes were sunk deep in the sockets. His wrists were bandaged.

"The flesh is off 'em to the bone," explained the nurse, a red-headed little fellow, in the white suit of his office.

Passavant looked at him; it was Dan Lyons!

"They had to give me the job," he said. "If they hadn't, I'd 'ave crooked Turpin, God rot his soul! Phil an' me was only havin' our bit of fun, an' that tub o' grease must block my way slidin' to first base! An' now—look at that!"

He waved an arm toward the cot, tried to wink at Passavant, but broke down, and turned aside, rubbing the back of his fist over his eyes.

By and by Phil partly opened his eyes, but waited for strength to speak.

Passavant bent down his ear to his mouth. His visage had no voluntary expression, but the shadow of the horror was visible upon it. He spoke at last in a dull murmur with pauses between.

"The ring she gave me—is in the joint of my cot—give it back to her. She'd never have married me—I'd have had to tell her—I did kill him! Took him by the hair and cut his throat open. I said, 'You belong in Hell'—and there I sent him."

He closed his eyes; but there was more to come.

"She did care for me—that's why I fooled her. I wanted her to be happy thinking I was all right. But mind this!" He was silent a long time, and when he again spoke it was with an emphasis which seemed to burn up the last of life in him. "You—tell her—the truth! I won't be pitied. She'll mind less if she knows!"

"I'll tell her, Phil," said Passavant.

The guard came up and motioned him to leave. "This ain't no confessional!" he observed.

Passavant went out, and Phil was buried in the prison cemetery next morning.

#### IV

PASSAVANT finished his term six months later; and as soon as he could, he called at the Countess Jocasta's address. She had left town for the winter. The following summer he found her at a seaside place. She lived in a private villa overlooking the sea.

Passavant, mingling in the parade of well-dressed people, who had nothing to do but amuse themselves, and breathe free air, marvelled that, in the same world there could exist that place of steel and stone to turn men into cowed and tortured slaves. Radiant blue and flashing white came tumbling in the ocean. Phil's body lay in a red-clay hole under the prison wall.

The Contessa was not quite ready when he was announced. Presently, however, a very old lady came into the room. Her distinguished manner convinced Passavant that she must be the Contessa's mother. Her voice was low and broken, and her Italian accent made it difficult for Passavant to understand her at first.

But she interested him, and he could imagine that she might have been beautiful a generation or two ago. To have a daughter so young as the Contessa, implied that she must have married late in life.

But did she know of her daughter's

romance? It might alarm her to get news of it from an ex-convict!

She bent her old eyes upon Passavant, and said, "You are perhaps he that wrote the letters for Filippo?"

Jocasta had always called him by the Italian name in her letters. So the mother must know of the affair.

Passavant bowed.

"He is dead—Filippo?" she asked, with a quaver in her voice.

"Yes, Madame. I have something from him to deliver to your daughter. If it is not convenient for her to see me now, I can call later."

"My daughter!" Her face assumed a strange expression.

At last she added, "I have no daughter!"

"I beg pardon," said Passavant, perplexed. "I had supposed—I came here to speak with the Contessa Jocasta. There seems to be some mistake—"

She rose infirmly, but with a stately bearing, and faced him. The pose, and some remote suggestion in the aspect of her withered features recalled, almost grotesquely, the face and attitude of the lovely photograph.

"I am the Contessa Jocasta Cenci!" she said.

Assuredly these words came from her lips; but they could not at once make their way into Passavant's mind; they seemed to stand in the air between them. After she had uttered them, she dropped back into her chair, in visible agitation.

Passavant tried confusedly to re-adjust facts rooted in his understanding.

"You wrote letters to my friend Phil in the penitentiary?—and that photograph!"

She had recovered her self possession.

"I comprehend your surprise, Sir. I wrote believing no explanation would ever be needed. He was a life prisoner—my own life would end before his—we would never meet. But I had no thought of meeting his messenger!"

"But the letters expressed hope of his pardon!"

She made a gesture. "I did not have that hope! I knew his case—it was impossible! Had I believed he would ever be free, I would never have written to him. Filippo was guilty of that murder!"

She said this with a lift of the head, as if her lover's crime added to her pride in him.

Passavant began to see light in this dark matter.

"You deceived him because—" But he could not put it in words.

"It was a good lie, Sir. We loved, and were happy in that. In my soul I am not old; he, in prison, would never know that my body is old; to him I would be always young and fair—as, in my heart, I am! A beautiful romance—nothing could destroy it! Had we met in this world—even had I been young—it would have been less beautiful! Misunderstandings, troubles—nothing in this world is perfect! But our souls, that are immortal, spoke to each other and comprehended each other. Our souls will meet and be happy. Things important in this world—that a man kills his enemy—that a woman lives to be eighty years old—these are nothing to the soul! God was good to us, and kept us apart. You understand?"

She gave him a smile—sphinx-like, or senile!

"Love—the romance—that is the great thing!" she continued. "The happiness of other lovers is in meeting; ours was in separation; he in his prison of stone, I in my prison of years; he with his picture of my youth, I with my memory of his smile in the face of his fate! He is dead—I am to die: do you think we shall not meet and recognize each other? Our letters were seeds planted here to bloom hereafter. Was it not well to plant them?"

Passavant was inclined to think it was, but he kept silence.

He gave her the ring, which she kissed and slipped on her finger.

"He lied to you, as you did to him—if such things are lies," said Passa-

vant. "He wished me to make his confession to you."

"His nature is noble: I did not need assurance of that," she replied, with a proud inclination of the head.

Passavant took his leave.

A month later he read in the papers

that the Contessa Jocasta Cenci, a singer who, sixty years before, had delighted two hemispheres, had died of heart failure.

But Passavant did not believe that the real heart of Jocasta ever failed her; and he liked to think that it was beating beside her Filippo's.



## THE MAN I LOATHE

By June Gibson

**T**HAT man—

The one who is dressed so quietly,  
And who bears the modest mien of a Baptist minister—  
I loathe him.

For his sake I abandoned cigarettes, although my nostrils quivered for the redolent aroma of nicotine.

I scorned liqueur although the scintillation of wine in tall glasses madened me.

I wore gowns that concealed although I knew the flash of my arms would entice.

For his sake I did these things—  
I loathe him.  
He ran away with a chorus girl.



## OBSEQUIES

By John McClure

I SHALL make a neat green cemetery to bury my little dreams. I shall tuck them away in little mounds, with turf to cover them up. I shall set head-stones and foot-stones, and deck them with flowers, green cabbage and jimpson weed. . . . I had fondly thought they were mine. I had been very kind to them all. . . . But now I have learned. . . . Other men have been dreaming them—it is now a thousand years—and putting them into books. . . . And here for twenty months I had fondly thought they were mine . . . blissful and ignorant like Herr Trippa . . . that was a cuckold . . . and knew it not.

With slow and funereal music I shall bury my little dreams.



# BYGONES\*

A ONE-ACT PLAY

By Miriam Michelson

*Author of "In the Bishop's Carriage," Etc.*

CHARACTERS:

HE.

SHE.

THE WAITER.

SCENE:

*A private room in a smart Tenderloin restaurant.*

*A small too-sumptuously furnished room; ornate satin easy chairs and couch; piano, table, marble stand with large Psyche reflected in heavily gilt mirror above; pictures—nudes; double doors in the rear; doors at the right and left mirrored.*

*The double doors are torn open. Enter HE and SHE simultaneously; a whirlwind entrance, HE carrying suit-case, SHE a hand-satchel; they are obviously bride and groom; doors slammed behind them.*

HE:

Phew! We made it!

SHE:

By a nose.

HE:

An adorable one. (*Kisses her.*)

SHE:

My mouth's jealous.

HE:

(*Kisses her.*) There!

SHE:

The rest of me's jealous.

HE:

(*Drops suitcase, takes her in his arms, kisses her repeatedly.*) There!

SHE:

(*Pushing him off.*) You bear!

HE:

Honey!

\* All rights reserved.

SHE:

(*Waving him away.*) But we did outwit them, didn't we? (*Brushes rice off his shoulder.*) Who could have told 'em where we intended to go?

HE:

Search me. (*Brushes rice off her hat.*) Trouble is you had all the fellows dead in love with you. Half of 'em you'd been engaged to and thrown over, you jilt! Of course, they swore to track us down.

SHE:

It was an inspiration of yours to desert the motor and to think of this place. My, ain't my husband cute!

HE:

(*Squeezes her arm.*) Ye—es. 'Tain't the most respectable place in town, but. . . . (*She looks about; sees pictures, statue; starts.*) Eh? Don't like it, do you, sweet? Well, 'twas dodge in here when that blow-out came

or get caught by the rice-throwing mob. And you wouldn't stand for that. You vowed you wouldn't—that I just had to get you out of it. So I did, and now we're here we might as well have dinner. Such dinners you get here—they say.

SHE:

(*Shivering.*) But I don't like this.

HE:

Why, 'tain't so bad-looking, even if it is—er—off-color.

SHE:

(*Glances about her distastefully.*) Let's go, Dan—let's go.

HE:

You said you were hungry.

SHE:

I—was.

HE:

(*Laughs.*) Buck up! Buck up! Where's your nerve, Mrs. Iverson? (*She laughs, blushes; he kisses her, holds her.*) And I say, just remember if you can—I can't, Lord knows, it's too wonderful—that we're married.

SHE:

(*Awed.*) We're married!

HE:

And marriage makes wrong right. Therefore, though the place is naughty, we're not, because we're married—married—married!

[*Tangoes her about, whistling, across room. She sinks into a chair.*]

SHE:

Oh, any place is heaven where we're together.

HE:

Exactly. And, as a matter of fact, we confer propriety upon everything shady just by being man and wife.

SHE:

Fancy being man and wife!

HE:

Fancy being man and wife!

SHE:

To think of your marrying me!

HE:

But oh, to think of your marrying me.

SHE:

(*Rising.*) You dear parrot! But seriously, you're different—different from all the other fellows. You know. You're fine. You're clean. That's why I loved you. I didn't think I'd ever marry—till you came. And now, how happy—happy—happy I'm going to make you!

HE:

How happy—happy—happy you've made me already. Ah, to think that—though the chase was long and strenuous—at last—at last I've captured you, you flirt!

SHE:

I'm not a flirt—not really. I did want everybody to like me—

HE:

Oh, you did?

SHE:

So that you'd see how nice I was, and like me more. (*Embraces him.*) Only for that, dear—dear! Nothing counts in the whole world but that.

HE:

And it's Isabel Wilby, the wildest coquette, the gayest girl in town a-saying it!

SHE:

No, it's Mrs. Daniel Iverson, the soberest, demurest, happiest wife in the world.

HE:

Sober! Demure!

SHE:

(*More earnestly, fingering his boutonnière.*) Sh—h! Be serious, just a minute. I have been a—a giddy sort, Dan—my Dan.

HE:

(*Kisses her.*) I wonder!

SHE:

(More seriously.) Not—not always as nice as the girl you were going to love ought to be. But, you see, dear, you—you weren't there at first. Oh Dan, if you had only come sooner! If you only had!

HE:

(Gaily.) Ho, sobersides! Ho, demure Mrs. Iverson! I like 'tother girl better—the girl I married.

SHE:

(Gaily, too, throwing off seriousness.) So do I. But now, now you'll see!

HE:

What!

SHE:

How I love you, you goose. How I adore you—openly, shamelessly, in the most unmaidenly fashion. (Throws arms about him, draws him to her, kisses him.) There! (Knock at doors, rear; she retreats.) Mercy!

HE:

(Laughing.) Don't you worry. No waiter in this establishment enters too soon after a knock. (She turns; looks at him quickly.)

SHE:

I'll just take my hat off. (Goes L.)

HE:

Not that way. The bed-room's yonder. (She stops; turns; looks at him keenly; goes R. exit, leaving mirrored door ajar.) Entrez!

[Enter WAITER with tray; sets it on table; places chairs.]

WAITER:

Ah, Monsieur! After so long a time!

HE:

(Finger to lip.) Sh—h!

WAITER:

(Nodding discreetly.) Parfaitement!

HE:

(Low voice.) I've brought my wife,

François. She is my wife all right. Understand?

WAITER:

(Cynically; low voice.) Parfaitement. They all are—always.

HE:

(Annoyed.) But this time, you old sinner, it's different.

WAITER:

(Arranging tray, sets two plates, and hors d'œuvres in middle.) Yes, yes. It always is, Monsieur Iverson.

HE:

Take care! You've never seen me before.

WAITER:

(Shrugs, looks knowing, grins.) Ah, as to that—parfaitement. Compris!

HE:

(Draws up to table.) Now then. Filets mignon—eh? It won't take long for them, while we're eating hors d'œuvres. My, they look good. Filets mignons and . . .

WAITER:

(Agreeing unctuously.) And hearts of artichaut. Just like last time, eh?

HE:

(Frowning.) We won't have filets. A duck now—

WAITER:

Like the time before last? Parfaitement.

HE:

Damn it! Cut that out. . . . A duck, salad,—

WAITER:

The claret Monsieur liked so much?

HE:

(Savagely.) No! We'll have champagne. (Enter SHE, without her hat and jacket and gloves.) Go on, now, fix it up. And hurry things a bit.

WAITER:

Parfaitement, Monsieur. (Exit rear.)

[DAN takes a caviare sandwich in his fingers, tastes it.]

SHE:

(Coming forward hastily.) Dan, you've been here before.

HE:

Here? (Turns to table, takes napkin, wipes fingers; turns to her.) Why —no!

SHE:

But—Dan!

HE:

. . . Well, sweetness? (Tries to embrace her; she retreats.) What's up?

SHE:

You—you've been here before.

HE:

(Straightens, looks keenly at her.) And you said that before.

SHE:

And you said—

HE:

And I said I hadn't.

SHE:

(Coming closer.) Dan, dear—please! You can be frank with me—now.

HE:

Nonsense. You can't be frank with a woman.

SHE:

Then you have been here!

HE:

(Vexed.) I have been here because I say one can't be frank with a woman. Where's the sense to that, Isabel?

SHE:

Why can't you, then? Why won't you tell me the truth?

HE:

You're catechising me. I won't submit to that tone.

SHE:

(Changing tone, pleading.) Why

can't you be frank with—with one who adores you? Please!

HE:

There's nothing to be frank about.

SHE:

Please! Please!

HE:

(Impatiently.) Oh, women don't—women won't understand. And men, well, men are men, Isabel, not saints.

SHE:

(Agreeing; low, hurt voice.) Not saints.

HE:

As experienced women, of course, know.

SHE:

But inexperienced ones?

HE:

(Lightly.) Inexperienced ones, sweetheart, just don't bother their lovely, innocent heads about things they don't understand, and—and needn't ever come up against. (Puts an arm around her.)

SHE:

(Nestling to him.) If I were experienced would you talk frankly to me?

HE:

About?

SHE:

About yourself and—being here before.

HE:

(A movement of impatience.) I did not say I'd been here before.

SHE:

No. But you might as well. Come —be frank, be honest. We're married; there's nothing now can come between us.

HE:

(Sharply.) I tell you, Isabel, I was never here before.

SHE:

(Breaking from him.) Oh—oh!

How can you lie! How can you, like that!

HE:

Isabel!

SHE:

I can't—can't stand it. How I have idealized you! But to be tricked, to be deceived, to be despised.

HE:

(Appealing.) Isabel, I love you.

SHE:

You don't; you despise me. Or you wouldn't treat me so contemptuously.

HE:

Contemptuously!

SHE:

Yes, contemptuously. Oh, I could forgive anything but this deceit.

HE:

(Coming toward her.) Isabel!

SHE:

(Flying from him.) No—no. There's some hope of genuine contrition in the man who confesses frankly. But the libertine who lies to himself and to his wife. . . .

HE:

Libertine!

SHE:

The men who know and use this place are libertines. You yourself said as much when you apologized for having to bring me here. (Pause.)

HE:

(As though it is wrung from him.) I was never here but once.

SHE:

Ah—h! (Shrinks from him, hides her face.)

HE:

(Imploring.) Isabel!

SHE:

Don't—don't!

HE:

You wanted frankness. You insisted on it.

SHE:

(Sobbing.) Frankness! I had to wring it from you.

HE:

You said nothing can come between us now. Isabel—forgive.

SHE:

(Weeping.) Oh—oh!

HE:

(Enraged.) A man's a fool—a damned fool—to be frank with a woman. Didn't I know it? Didn't I say it?

SHE:

(Still weeping.) To make a confidant of a waiter! And about me!

HE:

(At a loss.) A waiter?

SHE:

How could I help seeing? The mirror in there (*points*) is just at an angle to reflect that one (*points*).

HE:

The devil!

SHE:

To have a fellow like that leer and smirk as—doubtless—he leered and smirked at my predecessors.

HE:

Predecessors?

SHE:

Predecessors.

HE:

Singular.

SHE:

Plural.

HE:

I told you, Isabel, I was never here but once.

SHE:

And you also told me you were never here before.

HE:

(With a gesture of rage.) What possessed me to let those asses with their rice—and—old-shoe stunt drive

me into bringing you here! (*She sobs more quietly.*) Isabel! (*She dries her eyes.*) Dearest, nothing's changed. Forget—forgive, sweetheart. The world's as new for us from today as though we two were just this minute created. (*Signs of yielding on her part.*) And really, that's what we are; never before were you Mrs. Iverson, and never before was I your husband. We two, why we two are all the world to each other and always, always will be. Does anything else matter?

SHE:

(Draws deep breath.) No.

HE:

(Embracing her.) My heart! My love! My wife!

SHE:

Forgive me, Dan. I—I was so miserable about it be—because I love you so.

HE:

(Kissing her.) Adorable!

SHE:

(Petting him, pulling his tie, rearranging it.) I'll never suspect you again. I'll never even think of this again, I promise you; and for all the years to come I'll love you, love you so (*straining him to her*) that you'll just have to forget I was ever cross and—jealous.

HE:

(Conscience-struck.) You sweet, magnanimous darling, I'd rather be forgiven by you than—than not to need for—

SHE:

(Sitting up.) Than not to need forgiveness? Dan, you wretch!

HE:

(Catching her again to him.) No one could be so adorably magnanimous

SHE:

Oh yes.

HE:

No—no.

SHE:

Yes. You could. You would.

HE:

I?

SHE:

(Nods; goes to table, takes small sandwich; he ditto.) Yes, you dear! If I were the sinner, you'd be just as forgiving, quite as magnanimous. (Knock at doors, rear.)

HE:

Entrez!  
[Enter WAITER with tray, places food on table. They eat hors d'oeuvres.]

WAITER:

Monsieur. Madame. (DAN takes carver.) Permettez! (WAITER sharpens it. They eat. Exit WAITER, rear.)

SHE:

Wouldn't you?

HE:

Wouldn't I what? . . . Oh, I'd forgotten. If you were the sinner, sweet saint, eh? That's delicious. (Laughs enjoyingly; leans across table, takes her hand.) All right, then. Come now, in your turn—confess!

SHE:

(Withdrawing hand; busying herself at table.) Oh see, what delicious things to eat. Can I help you, monsieur?

[Offers to serve salad.]

HE:

No, you don't. Not that easy. Come—confess.

[Crosses over to her, behind her chair.]

SHE:

(Leaning back, looking up at him.) Shall I?

HE:

(Bending down affectionately.) You've got to.

SHE:

(Uncertainly; mimicking him.) A woman's a fool to be frank with a man.

HE:

(Laughs.) Clever little sinner I've got for a wife. . . . Come on now.

SHE:

All right. Lean down. (Pulls his head to hers.) I—love—you—disgracefully.

[They kiss.]

HE:

And is that your only sin, sweet penitent? If so, I absolve you.

SHE:

No. There's one more.

HE:

What!

SHE:

I'm famished. I couldn't eat—today. I haven't slept—I haven't eaten—for thinking of you.

HE:

(Hurrying to his chair.) My darling! And here I've been starving you. What a brute a man is!

SHE:

(Serving salad.) Not my man. Oh, you're my man, Dan—my man! [Catches his hand as he is about to take plate; kisses it.]

HE:

Isabel—Isabel, don't do that. No man's worthy of it. You know I'm not. [Begins to carve.]

SHE:

(With conviction.) Nor am I.

HE:

(Looking up.) Hey? (Knife slips, cuts his hand; he jumps to his feet.) Oh!

SHE:

(Jumping from her chair.) Oh—you're hurt! What a nasty cut. Let me see. My dear, my dear, it's my fault. Oh, and the thumb's almost severed. Oh!

HE:

(Trying to staunch blood.) Sweetheart! Your fault?

SHE:

Yes, mine. I made you nervous. I was nervous myself, and I—

HE:

(Interrupting.) You've made me mad with love of you. You've thrilled me—you've intoxicated me!

SHE:

Dan, dear, you're pale. Oh, it is a bad cut. Won't it stop? Can't you stop it?

HE:

(Sits down on lounge; a bit faint.) Beastly thing—blood. Hate the sight of it. It always did nauseate me.

SHE:

(Distracted.) Oh! . . . (Stands thinking.) There's just a chance. . . . (Runs to closet door; speaks in undertone.) It may be here still. (Opens closet door, pulls open a drawer; returns to him immediately with adhesive plaster; bandages his hand, ties her handkerchief over it.) There! There, dear. And lie down a moment. Please! To please me. (He stretches out on lounge.) That's better, isn't it? Oh, isn't it?

HE:

You darling. Of course, it is. Thank you, sweetheart, I didn't know I had a first-aid for a wife. (Draws her down; kisses her.) Neither did you know you had a coward for a husband, eh? Such a fuss about a little blood.

SHE:

My husband's no coward, sir.

HE:

Oh, I am ashamed all right. But it was a nasty cut.

SHE:

(Shuddering.) What possessed the waiter to make the carver so sharp! Ugh!

[Puts bandaged hand to her lips.]

HE:

(Regarding it.) Bully neat little bandage. Lucky you had the adhesive with you.

SHE:

(Nods; a bit taken aback.) Ye—es.

HE:

But. . . . You didn't have it with you. (Sits up.) You—Isabel, you got it from that closet. (Points.)

SHE:

(With forced gayety.) Did I? Good work. . . . And now (Going to table.) this accident gives me the chance to carve. They say the wife who carves at the first meal of her wedded life, wears the breeches. Now, Mr. Iverson, aren't you scared? (She begins to carve; looks up presently; he has not followed her to table, but sits intently regarding her.) Which part do you prefer, husband of me?

HE:

(Coming forward slowly.) Isabel, how did you know you'd find adhesive and things in there? (Points with bandaged hand.)

SHE:

I didn't. (Her knife slips.) Tut! I made straight for the closet. . . . (Bites her lips realizing her mistake.)

HE:

But how did you know there was a closet there?

SHE:

Know? I didn't. I just. . . . (Stops.)

HE:

But you went straight there.

SHE:

Did I? Instinct. Pure instinct. Isn't that curious?

HE:

(Dryly.) Very. (She looks up at him quickly.) I said very.

SHE:

Yes, it is. I—I just rummaged about through all the drawers one after the other—desperately—and there it was.

HE:

It's very curious. You see, I'd told you the bed-room and bath were over there. (Points.)

SHE:

(Arranging food on plate.) Uh-huh, so you did.

HE:

But I didn't know about that closet. . . . How did you.

SHE:

(Straightening; bored.) Oh, Dan!

HE:

How could you know unless. . . . (Stops.)

SHE:

Unless? [Tense silence. His eyes on her, she watching him. Suddenly, with an exclamation, he hurries to the closet L. Throws door wide open, showing inside. He returns to her; her eyes, which have not quitted him, fall. He turns toward her, then from her. Then—swiftly speaks.]

HE:

There's not a single drawer open in that closet but the one.

SHE:

Did I leave it open? Careless, wasn't it? But I was so hurried, so frantic about your hand. Does it still hurt? (Tenderly.)

HE:

(Lifts his hand, looks at it, then at her.) No.

SHE:

No?

HE:

I'd forgotten it.

SHE:

Good.

HE:

(Decisively.) Isabel, no other drawer but that one had been opened.

SHE:

(Rising uncomfortably, pushing back

*her chair.*) Well? You said that before.

HE:

Yes, but I didn't say that the reason is—there is no other drawer.

SHE:

(Faintly.) No other drawer?

HE:

No. And you said you looked through all of them

SHE:

Did I? (*Trying to laugh.*) What nonsense one talks when one gets excited. Your hand—

HE:

Damn my hand! There's but one drawer in there; it had lint and adhesive in it. How did you know it?

SHE:

My dear boy, I—

HE:

How could you know it?

SHE:

(*Turning from him.*) I don't like your manner. I don't enjoy being cross-questioned.

HE:

(*Catching her by the arm.*) Tell me. Tell me instantly, how did you know?

SHE:

Let me go! I didn't know.

HE:

(*Threateningly.*) Isabel!

SHE:

(*Twisting from him.*) You've just said I didn't know my husband was a coward. Neither did I know he was a bully.

HE:

You've got to tell me. I've got to know. I can't live and not know.

SHE:

(*Changing tone; imploring.*) Dan, dear, I love you!

HE:

No, you don't, you despise me or you wouldn't. (*She starts.*) My God, that's what you said to me ten minutes ago. The very words—the very words. And . . . And the very thing. . . . Isabel, you've been here before.

SHE:

You're mad.

HE:

You've been here before. Of course—of course—the inter-reflecting mirrors, you knew about them. When we came in, you were going to hang your hat in that closet, when I told you about the bed-room. And when you wanted plaster, you went straight there for it.

SHE:

(*Choked, resentful.*) I wanted it for you.

HE:

Of course; you knew it was there.

SHE:

I only knew you were suffering.

HE:

Suffering? God! (*Plucks at hand.*) What's this to the death-blow you've given me? You've been here before. You've been here before! (*Sneering scornfully.*) Was your other lover clumsy, too? You seem to be unlucky in—Or, was it you. . . . (*Stops, thinks; explosively at length, with intuition.*) Yes! You had sprained your ankle. The very first time I saw you—at the Horse Show that night, you were limping. It was here—and you sent out for adhesive. Just now you remembered—hoped to find it again—it might be here. O—oh! It was here you—you. . . . O—oh! (*Sinks in chair, hands over his face.*)

SHE:

(*Hurrying to him.*) Dan—dear. Don't—don't! I love you—I love you with all my soul. (*Kneels beside him.*)

HE:

(*Turning to her, holds her before him.*) Then tell me the truth.

SHE:

The truth? Why, I have told you.

HE:

Tell me the truth!

SHE:

(Trembling, stammering.) Dear, it's nothing. It's the most natural thing in the world. Anybody would have hunted for things—everywhere—just on the chance. It was the merest chance. Anybody . . .

HE:

The truth! The truth!

SHE:

You're hurting me.

HE:

You're killing me!

SHE:

(Desperate.) Then. . . . It's true.

HE:

(Lets go of her.) True? . . . God!  
(Collapses.)

SHE:

(Rises; wrings hands, crying out wildly.) Oh, why—why did you make me tell it!

HE:

(Dazed.) True! True! . . . It's true!

[A pause. She stands, looks at him, comes to him, makes as if to speak; turns from him; goes to bed-room R, brings out hat, jacket, begins to put them on.]

HE:

(Lifts head; speaks dully.) What are you doing?

SHE:

I'm going.

HE:

Going?

[She nods; waits; he says nothing; she looks at him long; sighs deeply; completes toilet.]

SHE:

(Bitterly.) And yet—"the world's

as new for us from to-day as though we two were just this minute created!"

HE:

(Winces.) Oh, don't!

SHE:

(Pulling on gloves.) All right. It's true only when it's a man that wants recreation; it doesn't apply to women. A man can go to the devil and come back. But a woman . . .

HE:

(Unhearing; incredulous.) To think that you—you!

SHE:

(Bitterly.) To think that you—you!

HE:

(Rising; roughly.) It's different. You know it's different. You needn't pretend you don't know.

SHE:

No. You've proved it to me, my magnanimous husband.

HE:

Magnanimous! . . . Oh, of course, you could be magnanimous. Who wouldn't in your place?

SHE:

You. You wouldn't.

HE:

(Angrily.) I'm not in your place.

SHE:

You are—you are in my place. We—God help us to forgive each other!—we're on equal footing.

HE:

(Coldly.) You won't get the world to agree with you there.

SHE:

(With sudden passion.) It isn't the world, it's us two, Dan! Two like us, man and wife, every two like us are a law to themselves in—in things like this. And no one outside, no matter how wise or how great, can say of the two—this one's right and that one's

wrong. Only two on earth—the two concerned so terribly, intimately—know the right and the wrong for those two. If I sin against you or you sin against me, who, but you or me, can judge the degree of hurt—hurt—that sin does to you, to me?

HE:

(Buries face in his hands.) Oh, I shall go mad!

SHE:

(Pleading earnestly.) And I never—never sinned against you. I could not—against you, Dan. I didn't know you—then. I didn't know the man lived who could make me care as—as you made me care. (Cries quietly.)

HE:

You've murdered it—you've murdered my love.

SHE:

(Sadly.) You didn't murder mine. Not unfaith itself could do that. . . . It was not a very strong or tenacious thing—your love. You didn't care—much.

HE:

Not care? Not care! Isabel, what am I going to do with my life? It's nothing to me now. What am I going to do without you? All my dreams and plans and hopes were built about you. And now you're not—you!

SHE:

I am! I am! All—all that you thought I could be to you I can be, I will be—and more. You don't—you can't know how I love you. You thought it was girl's love; it's woman's I couldn't tell you before. I couldn't let you see. (Her hands are out to him; he turns from her.)

HE:

I thought you an angel. . . . Horrible! I could never trust you again.

SHE:

Dan! Dan!

HE:

Not you, nor any other woman.

Never! (Sinks in chair, head in hands.)

SHE:

(On her knees beside him, her hands on him.) Listen. You must listen to me. You don't know what you're doing to me—to yourself. For a thing that's done, for one mad, hot-blooded fool thing a wild girl did, a girl that's not I any more—on my soul, not I!—you're crucifying our love (He winced.) Yes, our love. A love that's as far above the sins of us both—us both, do you hear—as the stars are above the fireflies that shine in the mud. Together we two can live up to that high love of ours and forget the mud in which we once lost our way. Together—we can. Apart—(Her voice breaks.) Apart, I don't know—I don't know . . .

HE:

(With a shudder, putting her arms away.) I'd see you always lying in another man's arms.

SHE:

(Rising; exalted.) And I shall see you always in my arms—mine. And hear your voice making love to me—only, only to me! (She goes to door, rear, with occasional incredulous glances at where he sits, crushed, unheeding. At the door she speaks.) I'm going, Dan. (He does not move. Still incredulous, she stands a moment; speaks with trembling voice.) Do you realize that I'm going? (He nods miserably. With a gasp she opens the door swiftly, goes, shutting door behind her. He breaks into sobs. After some moments, rises, runs to door.)

HE:

No! . . . No!

SHE:

(Outside.) Dan! Dan! (She re-enters, breathless, as though she had run back, stands against door slammed behind her.) A man—a man insulted me!

HE:

(Enraged.) Insulted you! Where—where is he?

SHE:

Out there. Outside. . . . But—oh, I forgot. I was so frightened I forgot that I haven't any right to come to you for protection. (*Retreats from him.*) And you—you haven't any right to resent an insult to me. You knew I was

going. You let me go. (*Suddenly breaks into passionate sobs.*) You let me go! Oh, Dan, how could you! How could you!

[*He stares at her for a tense second. Then with a cry takes her in his arms.*]

CURTAIN



## THE BRIM

By Edward J. O'Brien

**H**E lay on the edge of the morning  
And laughed at the ocean lands,  
And all the light from the dayspring  
Was brimming in his hands.

Wind from the flowering starlight  
Rippled over his heart.  
The veins of his flaming body  
Sang apart.

For all that day of wonder  
Flesh and flower lay still,  
While color sighed on his eyelids,  
And clouds slipped over the hill.

And still in the golden evening  
He lay with the dreaming sun,  
Till the wind stole away from his body,  
And the night and he were one.



**M**EN love Logic, because by Logic anything may be proved. But women love Illogic, because by that anything may be disproved.



**T**HREE are no wholly agreeable marriages, nor wholly disagreeable loves.



**L**OVE begins with a song and ends with an autopsy.

# THE CONFESSIONS OF A PHIL-ANDERER

By Basil Grenville Thomson

## § 1

I HAVE played the game. All my life and in all parts of the world I have played it and played it intelligently.

Some men find relaxation or a keen pleasure in some form of sport; others ride a hobby of numismatics, orchid-collecting, or the acquisition of first editions; still others play chess. None of these things has held any sharp interest for me. I have chosen instead, as a means of amusement, the game of love.

I supposed that the average man has in his lifetime only four or five love affairs. The average man for all his sentimentality, for all his prevailing taste for amorous literature, is rather afraid of love-affairs.

He is afraid they may lead him to endanger his business or imperil his reputation. His emotions may cause him to act upon some mad impulse. For he is a simple enough fellow to take those emotions seriously.

In certain parts of America it is difficult to keep dogs owing to the prevalence of porcupines. A young dog, having attacked a porcupine and received a painful mouthful of quills, either contents himself in future with barking, or else fails to employ his reason and charges upon the next porcupine he sees. So with the average man, and so with the trained philanderer.

The first falls in love more than once, and hurts himself; the second, having learned his lesson the first time, has

thereafter all the excitement of the chase and yet keeps his reasoning faculties dominant.

I have decided to put down upon paper what I have learned. I shall select a half dozen characteristic and varied affairs of mine, affairs with women who required a subtle handling or demanded merely the crudest technique.

I have pursued women, and yet have not pursued them in the ordinary sense. My task has been to entice *them* to pursue. And that task requires, if I may say so, a certain amount of brains.

At the outset of this article I must admit that it was chance and not deliberation that threw me into my avocation. When I was a lad of eighteen, I attacked a porcupine. I fell in love. It was the first time and it was also the last.

She was older than I was, and she knew the ropes. It is hard for me now to separate the real woman from the magnificent illusion I had of her. But I think she must have been uncommonly cruel.

The final, bitter night, when she told me I was a silly little fool and that she would like to ask one of the servants to thrash me, still rankles. I was a romantic youngster. I swore upon my faith in tragic drama that I would revenge myself upon her sex in general. When I was old enough to grin at this absurdity, I found that my revenge was offering me a superior sort of stimulation and diversion.

That I should have dropped out of the running even then is probable; but

I was not allowed to do so. I must frankly admit that I am by no means ill-looking, that I have what is popularly termed 'an air,' and know how to act pretty well. A man eternally surrounded by billiard-tables is likely, in the end, to become a devotee of the game.

To arrange in chronological order such affairs as I shall narrate would consume too much of my time in reflection. Let me choose at random and detail my method of attack in each case.

### § 2

THE first principle I must emphasize is that of making love to two women at the same time, and letting each know of the existence of the other.

It was in this manner that I conducted my affair with the ballet-girl, whom I may rename Lilly Monteith, and the Countess of X.

Lilly, I happened to meet in a quite formal manner; to the Countess of X. I introduced myself with my eyes. I followed out certain theories in that pleasant contrast which I found to be fundamentally correct.

Upon Lilly I spent little money, and gave her to understand that her society amused and pleased me; but that that society was all I desired. With the Countess, whose noble husband was gadding about on the Continent at the time, I made no pretensions to being fascinated for an instant by her intelligence, her charm, or her position. Her attractions, I let her know quite plainly, were of another sort; and I stepped outside of my income to administer to her pleasure and to buy her kisses.

I kept Lilly constantly informed of my affair with the Countess; I kept the Countess pretty well acquainted with my intimacy with Lilly. Rivalry is a supreme note which one who plays upon the chords of human nature strikes constantly. I found that the results of my maneuvers justified my most sanguine expectations.

Lilly endeavored to behave in the manner of a Countess. That is, she became, to my amusement, a stickler for

proprieties, insisting upon a rigorous code at all our meetings. The Countess, on the other hand, frankly abandoned herself to the other extreme.

By an odd coincidence my conquest of each arrived simultaneously. One afternoon at tea with the Countess I spent some time in vaguely outlining certain purely imaginary deviltries committed by Lilly. I talked, I fancy, to good purpose.

And before I left, I took out my keys and dropped them quietly on her table.

Next afternoon she entered my apartment. I infuriated her by showing neither surprise nor excitement. She literally threw herself into my arms. I was forced to release her at the ringing of my telephone.

It was Lilly. She couldn't stand it any longer. Where was I? And why hadn't I seen her for the past two days? Didn't I know she cared? She was prepared to throw off the mask of correctness. She wanted me, wanted me awfully. . . .

A woman, I may observe, gives all or nothing.

### § 3

FANNY LORD was as stupid as she was pretty. And she was very stupid. There are so many stupid women that Fanny deserves a passage to herself in this article. It may be of interest to the average man to learn how a connoisseur in love handles such a type.

It took me some time to discover exactly how stupid Fanny was, but after I had wasted a week's subtleties upon her without producing any obvious effect I woke up to the fact that she required the world-old, simple treatment—with a difference.

For the next fortnight I showered her with flowers, rang her up constantly, took her to theaters and luncheons, to a regatta and a ball. In short, I permitted her to gather the impression that I was her captive. As soon as she was firmly sure of me, as soon as she considered that she had merely to ask in order to receive, I took the contrary turn.

She had no sooner placed her foot on my neck, preparatory to wondering why I was squirming, when she awoke to the fact that my neck wasn't there. In other words, I had beaten a retreat.

A week, ten days, two weeks slipped by, and then one afternoon I went to a function at which, I was privately aware, she would be present. I shook hands with her, asked her how she did, and was extremely courteous and aloof.

The look of perplexity in poor Fanny's eyes! I can see it still. No woman chooses to lose an admirer, even an insignificant one. And I was hardly insignificant. If the ivy climbing around the oak were to fall away, I have no doubt but that the oak would make some vague natural effort to recover its embracer.

Poor Fanny! She asked me if I wouldn't call. I gently refused. She made further advances. I consented with reluctance. From that time on, our positions were comfortably reversed. Fanny did all the pursuing. Her absorption in the chase must have exaggerated my value. Poor Fanny! . . . There are some things which must remain sacred even beneath pseudonyms.

But the method I have here expounded is worthy of attention despite its simplicity. Failing every other means, pretended adoration followed by pretended indifference is a safe card to play. It lacks the delicacy, the elusive colouring of the more highly complicated performances, but it wins invariably to the goal.

#### § 4

FROM every love-affair it is difficult to extricate oneself when one so desires. One always does desire at some time or other.

I recall in one of my earliest experiences how I perceived breakfast crumbs on the cheek of a woman whom I was actually in danger of thinking divine. Those crumbs robbed me, unjustly perhaps, of all further illusion. I learned afterwards that in every love-affair there arrives, sooner or later, a morn-

ing when one perceives crumbs upon the cheek.

How to leave the field of victory with the correct air is a subject worthy of some study. Once, in attempting to break off a completed affair, I inadvertently remarked that my attentions were being directed to another object. The woman promptly grew more deeply affectionate than ever.

No; if one is to conclude a passage, there is only the lamentable trick of discovering a conscience in oneself and retiring on purely ethical grounds. Such a manner allows one to leave the field and yet leave it with a degree of dignity. How many, many times have I not had to awaken my conscience and utter the old formulæ of penitence!

I am very frequently entertained by finding in fiction and in the press various references to "platonic friendship." Anonymous correspondents inquire of sob-sisters: Is it possible? As to whether it is or isn't, I am afraid I am no sure judge. I may remark, however, that I fail to see what earthly pleasure may be found in a platonic affection. In my opinion the person who wishes it really deserves such a disaster.

Yet, in spite of this sharp censure, I must admit that for some time I, myself, kept up a quiet intimacy with a woman called Susan Thomas. But I was not exactly responsible. It was really Susan who kept up the intimacy with me, and I, on my side, made no endeavor either to commence or to prolong it.

For a while I found her a pleasant enough acquaintance, useful at a pinch when any of the highly proper clan of my relatives came within calling distance.

Susan was quite plain. Her plainness carried with it a certain touch of piety, and I could afford to throw away nothing in the line of character that fell to my hand.

About the time that I first found myself growing acquainted with her, there came my affair with Astra Allen.

## § 5

I BELIEVE that, as in the case of the Countess of X., I employed some contrast with Astra, but for the moment just who the person was has slipped my mind.

Astra was excessively modern. Her interest was bound up in economic and sociological matters. Contemporary philosophy received her attention. She was quite concerned about socialism and suffrage. She held to a quaint belief in the single moral standard, and advocated her principles with a deal of unnecessary frankness.

I have never made the ridiculous mistake of using my ears when in the company of a woman. It was Astra's warm mouth and deep blue eyes that informed me of her principles much more accurately than her words.

I fell to work at once, delighted at meeting with a new type.

I told Astra that her platitudes were the breath of a divine wisdom, that her intelligence was superior to anything I had ever known. I also informed her that physically she was not attractive, and commented upon what a comfort it must be to her to realize that her truths were accepted for their own sake. I made tactful references to the woman (whose name I have forgotten) in whom I was interested at the same time.

The latter, I said, made a powerful appeal to me through the senses; but there was little danger of my forgetting myself in Astra's presence. It was her mind that fascinated me.

Astra's efforts, after that, to make me forget myself were, I am glad to say, highly successful.

Pretty little Astra! She is the mother of five children, I understand. She married a minor poet who appears to be creatively prolific in at least one fashion. . . . I hope she is quite happy.

## § 6

ANNE POWERS was the cleverest woman I ever met. It was necessary

for me to keep my eyes open. It took me some time to arrive at an acute means of successful philandering in her case.

In my life I have tried many stratagems, but I knew of none that would conquer her. Once, at a house-party, when quite a young man, I permitted myself to grow ill. The pleasant little thing who insisted on nursing me, and on whom I had my eye for some time, succumbed to her own sympathy.

In another case, I even simulated an uncontrollable alcoholic craving in order to gratify a woman's taste for reform. She reformed me—thoroughly.

But I could think of nothing with which to win Anne. She was too clever for such simple ruses. And when I say clever, God forbid that you should gather the impression that she was intellectual!

In spite of the difficult, I had learned to trust one rule implicitly. To what degree it may apply to other matters I am unable to say, but in the business of love the copy-books are really correct:

## Persistence wins!

I went to work at the case of Anne and hung on with persistence. Susan Thomas, who still kept up her intimacy with me so that I found it rather a nuisance, would hardly serve as a rival. I tried every scheme I had ever conceived, and each was unavailing. Anne laughed coolly and politely.

Not that I did not have the outward tokens of affection from her. Those are, of course, extremely simple, and are to be secured by any schoolboy with a sufficiently flattering tongue. But the sincere fire, the accompanying glow, the earnest of passion—these things are what I have striven for and what I have gained.

How did I win Anne Powers? By the simplest of fashions after I had vainly tried every complex and subtle attack of which I was master. I happened to discover that Anne had a profound, feminine love of magnanimity. She was weak only in that she ardently desired to forgive.

By a skillful piece of acting I caused

her to think that my past conduct had been a species of hypocrisy. I became suddenly brutal. She forgave me. I became cruel, tactless, hard. She forgave me. And presently she discovered that if she wasn't to be able to forgive me with great frequency, life would prove a hollow thing.

She wanted to forgive me for something quite unforgivable. . . . She did.

Persistence wins.

### § 7

To offer you many more of my experiences would be tiresome. Besides you have, no doubt, gained considerable information from what I have already set forth. I repeat that it is not as imperative to be handsome or distinguished as it is to be intelligent. And knowledge of women is a gift of instinct in most cases. It is seldom to be gathered from experience when it is not inborn. The game is, in any case, the most amusing pastime thus far invented for the discriminating man.

I cannot refrain from adding here a final brief chronicle which has a certain distinctive interest.

Stella Norreys was the sort of woman who is commonly called "a cat," and who, in the curious, melodramatic exaggeration of the cinema, is entitled "a vampire." So far as I have been able to find out, the term means merely that this type, unlike her sisters, makes no effort to conceal her unscrupulousness, but instead, even makes a virtue of it.

Stella made such efforts at the outset to secure me, that for a while I wondered whether hers was not one of those pathetic cases of delusion at first sight.

I had, it happened, the unpleasant figure of Susan Thomas before me, and this gave balance to my viewpoint. Susan's plain, uninspired face and dour tongue were a sufficient contrast to point out Stella's genuine character. She was a collector of men's hearts even as I was a collector of women's souls.

It wasn't, however, a fair match.

The average woman is superior to the average man. But the unusual man is not only superior to the average woman but to the unusual woman also. Stella, if I may say so, was not my equal in the struggle.

Before all her wiles I was unmoved. She couldn't understand. I had seen the world, I had made my mark, I seemed intelligent, I gave occasional hints that I was human, and yet nothing that she could devise appeared to have the slightest effect upon me.

And thus she tried so hard to force me to my knees that she was carried away by her own emotions. She ended by falling on hers.

Where are you now, Stella? Do you recognize yourself and me in these pages? Someone told me that you had married a South American millionaire. I hope so. And I shall not forget that evening of early summer in a Sussex garden when my grotesque sentimentality didn't seem, for a moment, at all grotesque, and you. . . . Well, well, I hope your millionaire is a decent fellow. I always had a certain spirit of sympathy with you, Stella, the sympathy engendered by our mutual avocation.

### § 8

As I lay down my pen, and look back for an instant upon the many lovely faces I have known, upon the sophisticated virgins and innocent wives that I have cultivated and been loved by, I smile pathetically at these things—so surely now beyond recall. It is not that I am an old buck, played out and cast aside. I have not lost my good looks nor my clear head. No; it is not any of these things.

Through the open window out of which I look, a woman is approaching across a wide lawn. She is carrying a bag of golf-clubs. It is nearly one o'clock, and presently I shall lunch with her. She is very plain and very rigorous. She has a bad temper. She is my wife. I don't like her. Her name was formerly Susan Thomas.

Persistence wins. . . .

# ON BEING THE WIFE OF A LITERARY MAN

By Dora McGill

LITERARY men—that is to say authors—should not be allowed to marry. Women do not sufficiently understand the disabilities attaching to the condition of wife to an author.

My husband is the author of *Vermin Castle*, *Pillars of Salt*, *The Soft Shell Crab*, *The Taffeta Trail*, and a dozen other popular favorites. He makes from his books a steady income of about \$7,000 a year, and a good deal extra from motion-picture rights and recommending tobaccos and garters.

I have no quarrel to make with the financial side of authorship. Anyone can make plenty of money if his books are bad enough. But he has no right to demand that an intelligent woman should live with him while he is writing them.

First of all one has to submit to being made the lay figure from which he draws his heroines. Imagine the humiliation of seeing oneself caricatured

over and over again; one's good remarks appropriated as the author's own; one's slips set down to the discredit of the sex in general.

One has to sit up all night to be on hand to hear the manuscript read aloud in its various stages of progress. One has to read the proofs for him, see that his photograph is taken, and interview the newspaper men when they come to call. One has to correct his spelling and grammar, but one does not dare to say what one thinks about books lest one be accused of meddling with matters of which one knows nothing.

And when he comes home boiled from the smokers of the Authors' Club, or when he talks of writing poetry, one has to put him to bed soothingly.

I imagine that the same grievances exist in the hearts of the husbands of literary women. I wish Mrs. Harold Bell Wright or Mr. Gene Stratton Porter would give us a frank confession.



IF there were more eligible men, women would hate one another less; if there were no eligible men they would probably stop hating one another altogether.



PORTRAIT of happiness: a man kissing a woman in an oarless skiff, his back to the bow—and going over Niagara Falls.



## "TINGLING TALES"

By Hugh Kahler

### I

O LAF HEDSTROM easily understood the attitude of mind which urged certain of his remote forebears to send their black ships over the westward bulge of their northern sea and to adventure in the new lands which lay beyond. He had less sympathy with those collateral branches of his breed which had seen fit to transplant themselves bodily to the same continent in softer days, to merge in the new, hybrid race springing up in the crudely fertile soil of a more or less virginal wilderness, but even they had been guided by some survival of the pioneering spirit of their ancestors, had faced a modified, censored life of adventure in their new environment.

For him, enlightened by travel and literature, America had not the least allure; it was as prosaic as the streets of his native Christiania, a land of dollars, of bricks and mortar, of fenced farms and factory chimneys. Admittedly it lacked the culture of the elder places, the repose and charm of age. Why should he trouble to inspect it, when England, with its pleasant memories of school years and holidays, lay almost at one's doorstep, and Munich and Paris and the smiling azure coast itself were within any easy traverse? As for that, Christiania itself satisfied; one had one's congenial friends, one's clubs and books and theaters, one's ordered, complacent existence without need of booking-agencies and transportation companies.

By which process of semi-mechan-

ical cogitation, at the age of twenty-seven, Olaf Hedstrom found himself already settled comfortably in his worn, easy groove, contented, unambitious. If there were, at times, vague, unworded longings in the background of his consciousness, he ascribed them to liver or a too liberal indulgence in his favorite Russian cigarettes, and physicked them accordingly.

You are not doing Olaf the injustice of ascribing to him the indifferent ignorance of the normal European regarding the physical aspects of America. Your Norseman is born with more practical geography in his mind than sons of other races subsequently acquire. It was precisely his accurate conception of the United States which robbed the country of interest or appeal.

He visualized with real verisimilitude the sprawling cities, perpetually undergoing alteration, the vulgar vastness of business, the wealth, the extravagance, the preposterous pretensions to culture and taste which were reflected in photographs of Boston and New York. In six or seven centuries, no doubt, the country would be worth seeing and the people not wholly impossible; six or seven centuries earlier it would have been a joyous venture to cross the empty sea and traffic with the raw savage. At present, clearly, a country to be avoided.

Indeed, prior to the momentous accident which altered his attitude so radically, Hedstrom had never consciously pursued the ratiocinations I have suggested. He was under no

more temptation to visit the United States than to do any other dull, vulgar thing. He did not think about it. It had no association whatever with the misty discontent which sometimes troubled him—until illumination came blindingly upon him, utterly without preface.

He found, in those days, a mild pleasure in browsing deliberately about book-shops, dipping here and there into a volume and, if it pleased him, buying it. It was in this fashion that he came upon a copy of an American magazine, forwarded as a sample, no doubt, by some optimistic manager of circulation, to the proprietor of a shabby basement shop in one of the town's back streets.

Instead of depositing it forthwith in the pile of reclaimable waste, as he would have done had his establishment been one of the neat, smart stores on the busier corners, this merchant laid it away on a shelf on the remote possibility that some day someone might be foolish enough to buy it.

Hedstrom justified his foresight. At first he thumbed the coarse, badly printed pages out of mere amusement. The cover, with its ill-drawn depiction of a lady apparently snapshotted either too early or too late in her toilet, contrasted so amusingly with the excellence of continental treatment of the subject that it held his casual eye, as one smiles at a gilded skillet or an array of hand-painted mussel-shells on a corner what-not. He glanced at the advertising pages in the same spirit, smiling more broadly over one ingenuous proposal to grasp a sorry nose entire and, by painless, inexpensive means, to remould that organ appreciably nearer to the heart's desire. Pictures suitable for the adornment of "dens" were also proffered in terms highly provocative; wens and wrinkles could be expeditiously removed, and superfluous hair banished forever. Deficiencies or excesses in the matter of adipose were easily remedied; the

mysteries of sex relations would be made piquantly plain in a volume "mailed under sealed cover."

All of which confirmed Hedstrom's preconceptions of America and therefore pleased him.

He dipped into the text. . . .

An hour later, as his eye reluctantly lifted from the final page of the ultimate story, he caught himself in the act of inhaling a long, quivering sigh and realized that he had not moved a muscle since the perusal's beginning.

Spell-bound, rapt, fascinated, he had devoured every one of the one hundred and twenty pages, in long, eager, thirsty gulps. He bore the battered magazine to the snuffy, skull-capped proprietor, who appraised his desire to possess it at no less than two kroner. He might have charged ten.

Hedstrom had left the shop, clutching his prize before a second thought came to him. He returned and ordered the shopman to procure future issues for him, with as many of the back-numbers as might prove possible. He added authority to purchase copies of other magazines, in case there were similar and rival publications in existence.

Later, in his rooms, he re-read the thing, word by word, experiencing something of that peculiar and insidious thrill which a boy obtains from *Robinson Crusoe* and "*The Mysterious Island*."

His common-sense told him that here was fantasy, far-fetched, impossibly unreal, but his wakened imagination fairly throttled the voice of cynical reason.

To Hedstrom his first copy of *Tingling Tales* brought something of the same emotional inspiration which his ruder forebears derived from the sonorous sagas of their tribal bards. In that hour he encountered not one, but a round score, of ideal women; spiritually he plunged into a series of adventures which Don Juan himself might have envied.

An unsuspected vacuum in his soul suddenly filled to overflowing; his hitherto unidentified discontent acquired definite objective, his unworded longings became positive, cogent, clear.

Life had taught him that all women were divided into two classes. There were, on the one side, the women whom one married. On the other, those whom one . . . didn't. There was no passing the gulf between, no twilight zone where the distinction became difficult. One thing or the other or neither—never both—thus experience and reason.

But Olaf Hedstrom had blindly yearned for both from his very beginnings. The women he might have married left him emotionally cold, even when they appealed to his more primitive desires. They lacked utterly the charm of forbidden things; there was no more piquancy in them than in potatoes; contemplating a life intimately shared with and by any one of them, Hedstrom found nothing alluring in the prospect.

Hence, at seven and twenty, with a pleasing quantity of sagaciously invested property, with the lean, upstanding body and clean, even features of his race and blood, he possessed his bachelor freedom without even the suspicion of a matrimonial lien upon it. And yet, inevitably, he had invited attention on the part of marriageable young persons and their parents.

No doubt his evasions arose subconsciously from the instinctive hunger of his northern breed for a dash of the pepper of romance on the cold beef of reality. Marriage, involving any of the eligible maidens of his world, offered him a broad, level, trodden highway, visible to the naked eye to the very end of the journey, devoid of the alluring curves and corners which beguile the journey to the eager traveller. There was no mystery, no doubt, no *terra incognita*

to be spied out. And Olaf Hedstrom's twelfth grandfather had driven an open galley to Vineland and explored Greenland's shoreline far into Baffin's Bay!

As for the others, who could offer romance a-plenty, and doubt and deviations beyond need, these allured as little as their prosaic rivals on the nearer lip of the gulf impassable. Hedstrom had no least taste for their cheapness, their vulgarity, their essential want discrimination. His instinct shrank from them as from a stuffy, unclean room. They could not create, for him, even the poor illusion of romance which they contrived for less exigent tastes, less alert perceptions.

Those vague aspirations, then, had yearned toward an ideal, a woman who combined the sparkle of champagne with the solidity of sound beer, a woman who could be, at once, mysterious and obvious, venturesome and timid, romantic and hard-headed.

He wanted Manon and Martha in one.

And he had no hope of realizing such a dream—not even when the dirty-grey pages of his cheap American magazine introduced him to a dozen of such women. . . .

It was only later that he began to believe in their existence.

As he discovered that a dozen publications of the sort flourished amazingly in the States, as he learned that their aggregate circulation ran far into millions, as he read and re-read their fiction, the idea grew upon him slowly that where there was so much smoke there must be some faint spark of flame.

This fiction was no doubt highly-coloured, yet, in its essentials, it must reflect life as it was lived across the ocean.

There must be women there who corresponded in some degree to the heroines of the stories which fired his imagination like strong drink.

He became adept at visualizing them—girls with laughing, challenging eyes and slim, strong bodies, girls who ven-

tured boldly against life, like men, and took their gains and losses with a smile, girls who met men half-way, who snapped their fingers at conventions, who were as independent as any gamin of the half-world and yet as pure as any saint on the stained-glass window of a church.

Their adventures fascinated him. They encountered some stranger on the beach, and, in four pages, had fled with him in a low, powerful racing-car, to escape some impending catastrophe in compromising company; they made acquaintances on street corners and in restaurants, in railway coaches and tram-cars, and pursued those intimacies through devious, thrilling situations to blissful conclusions in the final chapters. They were gloriously frank, splendidly fearless, adorably feminine, all at once.

Olaf Hedstrom ended by taking passage to New York in a frame of mind not wholly unlike that which had possessed his great ancestor when the long galley slid down the sands at Stavenger fjord.

He scarcely hoped to realize the dreams which had destroyed his comfortable vegetation; the word is over-strong. He wondered, rather; he meant to find out. But, in the back of his mind he believed in the sirens of the sunset land as firmly as poor Ponce de Leon in his fountain of youth.

The heroic figure of Bedloe's Island oddly strengthened that conviction. There was to his ice-coloured eye something of promise in the great, glorious woman, standing at the portal to greet the questing outlander. Some clear vision must have guided these Americans in choosing as their patron goddess a splendid woman in the guise of Liberty! A land of free men, possibly; a land of free women . . . no wonder Olaf spared no glance for the compelling sky-line of Manhattan as the *Oscar II* crept up the harbour! He could not tear his eyes from Liberty, the type and emblem of that which he had come to find, the woman who was all-in-one!

## II

HE secured rooms at an hotel which commanded a splendid sweep of green park and broad avenue, negotiating with the room-clerk concerning the price in a fashion to stir the unwilling respect of an individual accustomed to Americans pathetically eager to be plundered.

He lunched well in a corner of a quiet, high-ceiled dining-room, eagerly attended by a waiter normally disposed to haughtiness, who pouched a ten-cent tip with more display of gratitude than he had ever accepted a hint as to the market from a lordly freeman of Manhattan's breed.

No one would have dreamed that, as he surveyed the women at nearby tables, he sheltered emotions roughly identical with those of the holidaying freshman. He did not in the least suggest romance. And yet, in his rooms, he reread a sheaf of magazine pages before sallying forth to the encounter, with a hot spark in his arctic eyes and a rapt smile parting his firm lips above the square, outjutting jaw.

He turned northward along the Avenue, skirting the park, walking leisurely, his shoulders back, his eyes alert. The stream of pedestrians thinned rapidly and the women he met, though many of them appealed more or less to his casual glance, seemed vaguely impossible as candidates for co-adventure. They were beautifully dressed, with exceptions, of course, which he disregarded easily; they carried themselves with the poise and confidence he had expected, their eyes, when their glances clashed with his, were direct, assured.

In some of the faces he read a distinct approval of himself even, but he shrank from the test of blunt accosting in the broad light of day. Something informed him that not even in the land of the free and the home of the brave could the time-honored conventions be set at naught quite so cavalierly.

He turned into the Park, strolling

slowly along its curving walks, past benches where pathetic derelicts drowsed in the afternoon sun, where capped and aproned nurses gabbled eagerly, with an eye the while to the revels of smocked, romping children, past, too, occasional benches where a solitary girl read or rested. He did not fear in the least to put his fortunes to the hazard, but he meant to choose with consummate care; he had no taste for half-measures. When he found the fit comrade of adventure there would be no hesitation. Until then he could afford to possess his soul in patience.

In the end, of course, he had his reward.

He came, rounding a sharp angle in the path, upon a bench unusually generous in its seclusion, set in a screen of thick-growing shrubs which cut it off from espionage at either flank and in the rear and exposed it only to frontal attack. Here, relaxed against the slatted back, a girl surveyed remarkably well-shod feet, extended before her.

A single glance told Hedstrom that superficially this person answered all his requirements. She was splendidly built, tall, slender, gloriously dark; her hands and feet were obviously those of the aristocrat; her raiment, if simple and unspectacular, had the atmosphere of both taste and wealth.

He hesitated, passed, turned, dared. He took his place beside her, permitting her to inspect his profile for a moment before he ventured further.

Then:

"I beg your pardon, but I wish you'd talk to me." He quoted the gambit of a remarkably proficient Lothario in "The White Night."

He said it, as that gentleman had done, "wistfully."

To the best of his ability "the frankness of smile disarmed suspicion."

"I'm so lonesome I'll run about howling if someone doesn't speak to me pretty soon."

He spoke with the clear-cut diction of a public-school Englishman, with

no trace of Norse breadth in his vowels.

The girl turned and surveyed him deliberately, below lowered, contemplative lids.

The corners of her lips descended ever so slightly.

"Tell it to Sweeney," she remarked, cryptically. "On your way before the bulls get here."

His brows climbed in honest bewilderment.

"I—I don't think I understand—"

"Of course not." She rose abruptly. "You try tagging me and you'll understand, all right."

She swung away from him.

He rightly gathered the sense of her speech, and, as she vanished beyond the angle, permitted her to go unchallenged. She clearly lacked the attitude of mind essential to the adventure.

He sighed. She was very beautiful. What a pity that she did not measure up to her exterior.

However, there was plenty of time.

He walked slowly back, canvassing every promising corner, but no second opportunity offered.

He reached his hotel and lounged, for an hour or two, in a deep chair whence he commanded a view of the tea tables.

Here he saw scores of women who completely fulfilled the specifications of his favorite authors, women with clever, sweetly insouciant faces, with frank, courageous eyes, with aplomb and assurance obvious in every gesture, in their carriage, their voices, women who dressed as he had never seen women dressed in the capitals of the elder world—their fashion combining the deliberate daring of the underworld with the restraint and discrimination of the higher strata. They seemed quite unshamed of cosmetic; they consulted tiny mirrors nakedly, elbows on the cloth of their tables, and remedied defects in make-up from gold vanity-boxes as unconsciously as they might have accomplished a strictly secluded toilet.

His hopes rose, expanded. Here, under his very eyes, were dozens of the

women he had dreamed about, women who could be all things to one man, at least, women who combined the proverbial guile of the serpent with the traditional innocence of the dove, women who had the courage of the street and the restraint of the drawing-room, women who had brain as well as beauty, virtue as well as piquancy, sophistication by the side of purity, knowledge without experience, freedom sans license. . . . They smoked, some of them, charmingly, without bravado and yet with an indescribable air of conscious daring; many of them substituted more potent waters for the innocuous tea; all of them charmed Hedstrom's eye and strengthened his beliefs. Wisdom was justified of her prophets.

It irked him that no faintest opportunity opened before him. The radiant beings who passed and repassed before him, who idled at the tables under his view, suffered invariably from escort or companion; the men who accompanied some of them stirred Olaf's envy and made him aggravatingly conscious of his helplessness; the groups of women annoyed him. Why waste themselves on one another when his hunger for a word, a smile, a slow, understanding glance must go unsated?

He searched his memory for precedent, but found none.

His authorities had neglected to provide him with the key to such a situation.

By the time he went up to dress for dinner he was in an evil humor with the universe in general. But his determination had stiffened at the confirmation of his theories. Women of the sort he had adored from afar did exist in sober fact. So much was certain. It rested with him to find a way of inviting elusive adventure.

“And I shall find it, no fear!” he told himself as he adjusted his tie.

The squareness of his jaw encouraged him.

### III

DINNER but inflamed his fancies more ardently.

The women at adjacent tables tormented him by their provoking near-and-farness; the presence of superfluous and complacent males in attendance accented the charm of the fantastic adventures which flitted persistently across his mental vision.

He ransacked his recollection for a hint; how had they managed it, those infernally lucky devils in the magazines? Something seemed always to happen to make it easy for them; how was he, lacking the aid of coincidence, to conquer fate single-handed? He became aware of basic disadvantages. He knew nothing of the city, of its devious ways, its furtive institutions; he could not, except by happy accident, place himself receptively in the path of onrushing adventure. He could not transport himself, as on a magic carpet, to the scenes of romantic encounters depicted by his authors—to convenient house-parties in the country, to select, exclusive seaside refuges; he did not even know the town resorts where adventures flourished.

He was handicapped hopelessly until he acquired that intimate acquaintance of the milieu which, to a saner vision, now became essential to his purpose.

He sighed as he signed his check. It would be a slower business than he had hoped. He might make some grievous error if he approached the matter in dense ignorance of conditions. This afternoon, for instance—that girl had seemed quite wholly charming and yet her speech and manner had jarred vaguely. She was perhaps not—not precisely of the class he had in mind. He travels farthest who travels slowly. He would be sure of his ground before he advanced again to the attack.

He stopped at a newsstand on his way from the dining-room and recognized the flamboyant cover of *Tingling Tales* with a sense of meeting an old acquaintance. He bought a copy and, foregoing a vague notion of theater or opera, bore it to his rooms. Here was the best possible guide to his stumbling foot. Here was advice, suggestion, enlightenment in tabloid form. What

better way to begin his education, then?

In the corridor, as he proceeded toward his own suite, he came upon a woman in the act of locking her door behind her. As he reached her she turned so that he saw her face, and the sudden beauty of it sent a tingling quiver of ecstasy through him. More. In the brief conflict of their eyes he saw deep into the woman's soul and found there exactly those qualities for which his own spirit panted thirstily.

Here, his intuitions chortled, here was vivacity coupled with virtue, here courage was tempered by timidity, her passion warmed purity to a roseate glow, here . . . she passed him, her splendid carriage defying the loose evening-wrap's efforts to conceal it, her small head erect, her progress a very poem in locomotion.

Olaf Hedstrom drew a vast sigh of wistful delight.

Something within him cried out that he had reached his journey's end.

Here, within a step or two of his own abode, chance had led him to the pot of gold at the rainbow's foot. He need search no farther. This woman satisfied utterly. Remained only to break the thin ice which separated them, to hit upon a means of insinuating himself so cunningly into her aloof existence that there should be no question of excluding him.

He clutched his magazine and opened his door.

Removing his coat he donned a loose robe of wadded silk, drew an arm-chair to the reading-lamp, lighted one of his long-quilled cigarettes. Deliberately he poised his attention above the pages, choosing at random which of the stories should first engage it. The sight of a familiar name decided him. He had learned to look eagerly for the fantasies of Harold Meeker, past master in the art of thrusting his characters unceremoniously into promising propinquity.

The first words leaped at him from the drab grey of the page.

He stiffened to rapt absorption.

The leaves turned under mechanical fingers; his eye devoured the story to

its uttermost line of eloquent asterisks.

He read it again—and again, his pulses hammering, the light of a sudden resolve dawning in his frigid eye. There was a risk—undeniably a risk; but as against it . . . the countervailing possibility sent the tiny thrills quivering up and down his spine.

He had learned something. He laughed at the ease with which knowledge could accomplish what ignorance found unthinkable. It was so simple, once one understood. His spirit overflowed with gratitude toward Harold Meeker, adept, keen-witted observer of life. Without his guidance how vainly might one bruise one's hands against the barred portals of Adventure! Enlightened, how readily those gates must yield!

He laughed joyously as he exchanged his dressing-gown for his discarded coat, donned the light top-coat and tall hat of street wear, took up his swagger stick and his gloves and sallied forth. He struggled with a tendency to chuckle as he rode giddily streetward in the rapid-swooping lift; he shook with delighted mirth as he left the hotel by a side door and walked deliberately around the square, to re-enter at the Avenue side.

With easy confidence he approached the desk, guarding its beehive of tiny cells for keys and letters.

#### IV

"NINE-SIXTY-ONE," he commanded, loftily, when the beautifully groomed young man was at liberty to heed him.

A schooled arm flashed at the bank of compartments, a key, tagged with a fiber oval bearing the number, rattled on the mahogany; the yellow envelope of a telegram beside it. This complication gave him an instant's panic; Harold Meeker had not foreseen that there would be anything save the key in that box. However, "a bold heart for present danger," as the Spanish say.

His hand did not tremble as he swept key and telegram quickly from the vision of the clerk.

He turned away, breathless but triumphant, gripping the key so that it cut into the flesh of his palm.

The lift hurried him nine stories nearer heaven in prosaic fact, nine million, to his fevered fancies.

He slipped along the soft-padded carpet of the corridor, his pulses all but suffocating him.

The desk of the floor-clerk commanded a view of the passage, but he rightly guessed that even that tutored eye could not distinguish between nine-sixty-one and nine-sixty-five, two doors beyond.

He inserted the key, turned it, entered.

Her room!

The faint, exotic scent of it intoxicated his avid nostril; he breathed it deep, thirstily. His eye flamed as he glanced about him at the intimate scene, the overflowing trunk, with its artless cascade of mysterious laces, the silver and ivory array of the dressing-table, the array of frocks visible through the open door of the clothes-press, like pale reflections of the personality for which they had been created—it could not have been better had Harold Meeker himself devised it.

Hedstrom became aware of the telegram in his pocket. He drew it out and glanced at the hurried script of the address. Miss Joan Heatherington! The music of it thrilled him as he whispered it over and over to himself. And she was *Miss* Heatherington. His intuition had rightly told him that she was not under prior lien.

He drew out his watch and forced himself to wait five minutes, an eternity of suspense, with every sense alert and taut. Mr. Meeker had not minimized the perils of this expedient. If the girl should return and demand her key discovery and disaster were inevitable; if the floor clerk suspected, if any one of a thousand contingencies arose, the design shattered to atoms instantly. But he must not hurry; precipitancy only invited attention.

He went out, at last, into the corridor, pausing under the eye of the floor-

clerk to make a show of relocking the door, with the rattle of key against lock, a careful shaking of the knob to make assurance doubly sure.

Then, with restored confidence he went down to the lobby, flung the key carelessly on the desk and stalked out. Again around the square, and again in through the postern gate, and again on the ninth floor, before the unbarred portal of his stolen paradise. He inserted his own key, ostentatiously, noisily. The door closed behind him. He drew a long, quivering breath of satisfaction. He was fairly secure, now. Only some remote hostility of chance could spoil his plan. He had only to wait until Joan—already he thought thus intimately of her—should return. Then, if his estimate of her proved accurate, the adventure would begin in earnest.

He laid the telegram on the carpet just within the door, as though thrust beneath it from the hall. Then, following the sage counsels of his mentor, he safeguarded against chance detection by hiding against the inner wall of the clothes-press, effectively concealed by the row of dresses and miscellaneous garments disposed upon its hangers. He left the door ajar for ventilation and observance, but it was uncomfortable none the less. A shelf compelled him to bend either his neck or his knees until he solved that difficulty by sitting on the floor amid a galaxy of treed pumps: the air was heated from a steam-pipe in the wall, and he found it increasingly difficult to breathe, even though the faint, insidious perfume of the silken clothes exhilarated him still.

Time dragged interminably. Each step in the corridor terrified him ecstatically; each time that it passed on left him weak from the reaction of his tense nerves.

Thus, when the unmistakable sound of the key in the door told him that his vigil was ended, he fancied that the night was far advanced, whereas Miss Heatherington was returning at the prosaically early hour of ten. Through the crevice he caught a flash-

ing glimpse of her as she entered, saw her stoop for the telegram before she bolted her door from within, heard a faint exclamation of impatience as she read it and crumpled it.

Then, as he waited, crouched and tense, only the vague sounds of swift divestiture, the luxurious half-sigh of relief as constricted feet shook off faintly-thudding pumps.

He nerved himself for the crossing of his Rubicon, aware that he must not delay too long.

He blinked as he came out into the light, to confront a startled, radiant vision in a pale-blue peignoir, a glorious, clear-eyed Diana surveying him with frank hostility and yet wondrously above the feminine foible of screams and hysteria.

He smiled propitiatingly.

"Please don't be too angry with me. It was any port in a storm, you see. They were waiting for me at my own door, down the corridor, and I'd seen one of them on guard at the elevator. I nipped in here just in time, or they'd have seen me. Lucky for me you forgot to lock your door."

He exulted inwardly as he saw the enmity fade from her eyes, as interest took the place of suspicion. Good old Harold Meeker! He knew his New York, he knew his New York woman! Hedstrom saw that he had already overcome the outer barriers and stood now before the inner walls of the citadel.

Meeker had given him the proper passwords, bless him!

He had piqued her curiosity.

"Why do they want you?"

Her voice went through him with a pang of pleasure that was almost pain, in the sheer music of its low, round tone. Her instant understanding of his half-cryptic explanation vindicated his appraisal of her intelligence.

In this first relenting she was more dazzling even than in her resentment at his intrusion. He tried to keep his admiration from too frank self-revelation in his eyes.

He shrugged expressive shoulders.

"You won't believe me, of course, but it's the truth that I'm not the man they want. They've been deluded by a cleverly trumped-up charge against me, preferred by certain people who want me out of their way for the present. I—I can't explain quite fully, even to you. I'm not at liberty to reveal my identity. I'm not supposed to be in this country, just now. If they catch me I shall have to take my medicine rather than tell who I really am and why I'm here. Can you guess, from that? I'm not an American, you see. Perhaps, in view of what's happening on the other side, that may enlighten you."

Her eyes flickered. He could have shouted as he saw the flash in their grey depths. He had touched her now. She thought she guessed.

"Secret service." She spoke without interrogation, as one utterly confident. "Which side?"

"Can you ask that? Isn't it evident from—from my appearance?"

He smiled, and lowered his voice to a whisper. "*Vive la France!*"

Her instant gleam of approval told him that he guessed her sympathies aright. But she continued to study him with a certain dubiety which vaguely alarmed him, none the less.

He thought he saw something like speculation in her eyes.

"What do they charge you with?" she demanded, abruptly. "How serious would it be if you were caught?"

A headline of his newspaper recurred to him in the nick of time. He had not prepared this feature of his program. Her question caught him off his guard. He snatched blindly at the straw.

"Rather serious, I'm afraid. You've heard about the man who was shot last night in the basement of the Kaiserthal Restaurant?"

She nodded, her eyes widening sharply.

He shrugged his shoulders. "They have arranged to prove that I did it. There will be plenty of witnesses, and I—I cannot refute their testimony, for I was there—a little disguised. My peo-

ple cannot help me. I think I should get rather short shrift from your law, unless you help me—”

“I’ll help you, right enough,” she cut in quickly. “The question is how I’m to do it. I can’t smuggle you out, if they’ve got the corridors guarded. It’s not going to be easy—”

He repressed a chuckle. Good old Meeker! What a brain that man must have! How he read the human heart!

“If—if you’ll let me stay here until morning,” he began, bashfully, “I—I’d have a better chance. I can’t explain clearly, but my crowd is busy at Washington and Albany, and with a few hours’ grace I might cheat the other lot, yet. I—I know it’s asking a tremendous risk on your part, to hide me here—”

She shook her head almost impatiently. “Never mind about that. I guess I can stand it. If that’s all you want it’s easy enough. You can have the clothes-press; I’ll give you some pillows and take out my things so that you’ll have more room; that’s easy enough.”

He thanked her with his eyes. Inwardly a fervor of rejoicing bubbled effervescently to his brain. Chance, and a little courage, had led him unerringly to the Ideal Woman, tender, brave, trustful, intelligent. He caught a glimpse of a future radiant with her presence and her love.

“I can’t thank you—now,” he said softly. “Some day, perhaps, when this business is finished, you’ll let me come and tell you—”

“Save it till then,” she commanded abruptly. “This is no time to be exchanging compliments.”

She sprang up and began dragging her wardrobe out of his refuge, piling the shimmering garments on bed and chair and trunk. She ravished the bed of two of its pillows, took the soft, fluffy puff from its foot and deftly created a makeshift pallet on the floor of the cubicle.

“There!” she said. “That’s not too bad, is it?”

She surveyed her work approvingly.

Then, as if struck by a sudden thought, she turned to him.

“I’d better see whether there’s anybody in the hall,” she suggested. “Perhaps they’re not watching any more.”

She stole to the door while Hedstrom’s exultation winked out like a lamp in a sudden gust. Why had she thought of that? He resolved to brazen it out, even in the face of a coast innocuously clear. He could manage it, with care.

She opened the door and peered cautiously into the corridor.

She drew back sharply, her face grave. “No use. There’s a man at each end of it. You’ll have to stay here.”

He bowed to hide his fervent relief. He blessed the two providential guests whose presence had confirmed his story and, obeying the girl’s gesture, went into his cell.

“I’ll have to shut the door—for a while,” she said, a faint flush dyeing her cheek, he thought, reading her mind. Just exactly what the girl in Meeker’s truthful narrative had said at a similar crisis in the affair! He bowed soberly and withdrew after the fashion of the tortoise. The door closed upon him. He grinned in the darkness. This was life! There was the sound, beyond, of hurried steps, a soft thud against the panels, the quick noise of a turning key, of wards sliding home. A vague sense of being imprisoned possessed him, the claustrophobia of darkness and confinement. He knocked softly on the door, to be instantly silenced by a sharp hissing admonition from beyond it. He was reassured. She had scented danger; it was for his sake that the door was locked, then. So much the better!

He relaxed on his pillows, reconciled to an interval of silence.

Straining his ears he could catch the sound of low-voiced speech in the room outside, though the words baffled him. Was it possible that some one else had already entered? For a moment his fiction almost convinced him; he had a flash of the panic of actual pursuit,

cowering on the floor, tense with excitement. Then he laughed softly. What had he to fear? Nothing, surely, from the girl, whose position in the event of discovery would be worse than his by an immeasurable margin; nothing certainly from anyone else. He chuckled at the thought. Meeker was a genius, a master. It was hot and stifling in the closet, but he bore these trials lightly. What an adventure!

Followed an interval of prolonged silence beyond the door. He ventured, at last, to knock gently and to call the girl's name in a muffled voice.

Again her hiss silenced him. He must play the game out, he realized. He must not seem too contemptuous of his supposititious peril. Later, when the moment arrived, he could play it as final trump, like the chap in the story.

"Better, far better," he would declaim sonorously, "that I should take my chances of capture and the rest than that you should risk the consequences of my being discovered—here!"

Then, of course, her woman's tenderness would see to it that she flung soft arms about him, barred his egress, declaring passionately that nothing mattered save his safety. He was completely confident of this. His faith in Meeker was practically boundless, in the light of so many confirmations.

He waited, with what patience he could, for the click of the lock and the blessed release from his durance. It seemed an eternity before the key rattled home and the door swung open. The room was brightly lighted and, for an instant, his eyes resented its radiance so that he saw indistinctly.

Then the scene broke in upon him even more blindingly.

He saw, first of all, the figure of Joan Heatherington, triumphantly erect and clad, now, in the costume she had worn when she entered, the soft fur collar of her wrap thrown back to expose her faultless throat, with a flash of brilliants gleaming against the rose-

ivory of the skin. But he had time only for a fleeting glimpse of her; his complete attention was instantly demanded by two business-like and burly individuals who presented the yawning muzzles of pistols unpleasantly straight in his direction and commanded him, in curt and earnest tone, to raise his hands and come out of his retreat.

Dumbfounded, he obeyed, wide-eyed, divided between mirth at the mistake and bewilderment at what must be the maddest of mad coincidences.

There was a quick, unanimous movement on the part of the gun-bearers. His wrists were grasped, lowered, brought together; harsh metal rings snapped shut about them.

"That's right, Hogan," said one of his captors. "You might as well come quietly. We've got you right."

He felt the urge of insistent hands guiding him toward the door. He became aware now of the presence of other men, alert, keen-faced young fellows, observing the proceedings with lively interest, of a stout, talkative Hebraic person addressing them with much gesticulation. The riddle of it all bemused him so that he found no speech to explain. He flung one imploring glance at the girl, to find her eyes fixed upon him with a look which thrilled him through. There was pity in it, compassion, and, above all, gratitude.

He let the officers remove him with the memory of that look uplifting his spirit. He saw, as he reached the corridor, the eager young men grouped about the girl, questioning her, while the ringed hands of the Hebraic person gyrated tirelessly.

Twenty minutes later he found himself in a metal cage partitioned off from a score of others in a foul-smelling cellar, after vainly endeavoring to explain the facts to a skeptical stout person in uniform behind a desk. It is not pleasant to spend an evening in a station cell under the best of circumstances. It is doubly unpleasant to pass a night there facing a charge of murder in the first degree. Olaf Hedstrom had

not come to America in quest of an adventure quite so perilous.

It did not add to his comfort to face a dawning certainty that his benefactress had betrayed him. The attitude of the officers made this maddeningly evident. He clung stubbornly to his faith in her through the dreadful night.

## V

THE *Oscar II* sailed from her North River pier mercifully late at night. As Olaf Hedstrom was driven swiftly westward in a scudding taxi he leaned back against the battered leather cushions in a state of physical and spiritual exhaustion, superinduced by three weeks under the ministrations of the New York police, on the one hand, and certain enlightening conversations with the Norwegian consul, on the other. His eyes glanced wearily from the window to fall upon a blaze of incandescents overtopping an arched doorway.

JOAN HEATHERINGTON

He closed them quickly, as if to shut out an horrific vision. He breathed more freely when his stateroom door had closed upon him and the steamer had edged slowly out into the river.

As they passed the dim bulk of a vast statue in the harbour Olaf Hedstrom lifted a clenched fist and shook

it earnestly in the direction of the monumental lady.

On the third day out, lounging in the smoking-room behind a Christiania paper, he became conscious of a conversation near him. Gradually he grew aware of its drift. He listened.

"Funny thing," said a thin, high-pitched voice. "They josh us writers about writing impossible stuff—things that simply couldn't happen. They keep telling us that fiction is funnier than fact. But look here—" there was the crackle of unfolding paper. "Here's a story I wrote a couple months back. Run your eye over it and then give these clippings the double o. Whadahyuh know about that, huh? Here's a guy pulls exactly the stunt I doped out—sneaks into a girl's room at the Zaza Hotel and tells her he's on the run from the bulls. My stuff, to the life. Only this boob has to pick out Joan Heatherington, the niftiest advertiser on or off the stage. And Abe Mandelbaum for her press-agent, too. Say! Did they go to it? Lissen—the space they grabbed for the next week would have been dirt cheap at an even million! Funny, huh?"

The smoking-room stewards succeeded in unclasping the strong, earnest hands of Olaf Hedstrom just in time to preserve the existence of one of our most popular young fictioneers, best known, perhaps, under his favourite pseudonym of Harold Meeker.



**I**N a truly happy marriage the husband is always a bit deaf and the wife a bit blind.



**A**H, that one could kiss a woman, and yet not have to be polite to her next day!



# THREE DRAMATIC REVERIES

By John McClure

## I

JOHN KNOX

THE Scarlet Woman of Babylon: Bah! The little witch! She had no business to come here over the water. She had no business ever to leave the country of France. She was rightfully damned. I am glad to have done it. Bah!

That way she had of smiling and shrugging her shoulders—it was driving the young men of Scotland mad. They could not sleep because of her. The little witch! She was rightfully damned. Making kings of her paramours. Bah! They did well to behead her. I would I had handled the axe!

She would have nothing to do with me. I could not approach her. Her smile drove me insane. Her shrug made me weak, and I old. She called me "Parson!" I could not approach her. She shrank from my touch. "Parson!" I shall never forget her. I would I might see her in hell. . . .

They did well to behead her. She had been the damnation of Scotland, surely! She and her paramours. Bah! The Scarlet Woman of Babylon! . . .

Very well. She rued it ere it was over. . . .

Often I think of her, even yet. She was very beautiful. I was not happy when it was done. "Parson!" She was more beautiful than the moon. . . . She . . . She was the lure of the world . . .

Ay. And Scarlet Woman of Babylon, damnation of Scotland, high mistress of hell. I am glad they beheaded her. The kingdom is saved. And I am old, and they know me now as "Strong Man of Scotland." It is all very good.

And yet . . . She was very beautiful. She was more beautiful than the moon.

## II

FRANÇOIS RABELAIS

They have drawn a picture of me in Italy, big as a barrel, with red cheeks and a monstrous growth of hair. François Rabelais, glutton, gourmand, brother of pigs. They have drawn a picture of me with a smile on my face, François Rabelais, full moon, as if it were really I.

They are very amusing.

They will not believe I am but a small man, sober, with few whiskers. They will not believe that I study about the Good God, and sometimes pray. They do not know that I laugh seldom, and that whenever laughter has crossed my lips it has been laughter at them. They do not know all this.

They picture me guzzling wine. They picture me choked upon capons.

They are very amusing.

They will not believe that I drink water, and eat bread, preferring them both—guzzling seldom. They cannot conceive I am a wise man. That is beyond belief. An' you told them I live in a bleak cell in a monastery, sober all day long, they would hoot. They cannot conceive I am a wise man.

They think I am a winebibber. They think I tell droll stories as they do, prattling for pleasure. They will not believe I am a wise man poking fun at the world. They will not believe I am a philosopher with a friendly contempt for the world.

## III

PIETRO MURRONE

(*Pietro di Murrone made the "great refusal" in December, 1294*)

Five-and-fifty years of solitude had made me holy of heart. I had prayed in my cave in the mountains for five-

and-fifty years to Our Lady of Holiness, calling upon the mercy of the Almighty God. Who shall say that I was not happy? Who shall say that I did not well? Power and riches, velvet breeches, passionate women, the twinkling lights o' Napoli and Rome—I had daffed them all. For five-and-fifty years. I lived in a cave in the mountains. All day I sat and prayed, calling upon the mercy of the Almighty God. That He might make me clean.

Who shall say that I was not happy? I sat and watched the lights peep out at evening up and down the valley. I listened to the sleepy twittering of little birds at twilight. The bells of sheep on the mountain-paths tinkled and tinkled in my ears all the day long like a hymn in praise and adoration of the Almighty God. Who shall say that I was not happy?

Then one day they came to me and said: "Come. You shall be Pope o' Rome."

They took me before I was aware what they were about. They led me to the Vatican, hung robes of satin and silk upon me, and a strange crown on my white hair, called me Celestine, as if I were to be emperor of China. And they said: "Now! You are Pope o' Rome."

They fed me upon spiced dishes and sweet wines. The place was infested with women. There was lust and intrigue in the air wherever I turned. Men fawned upon me, women patted my wrinkled cheeks.

I was king of a kingdom with an

army to plunder and burn. Princes feared me, and hated. I walked in splendor like Cæsar Augustus. I was continually changing clothes. The cardinals whispered politics into my ear eternally. I was like a prince of the east. I conducted ceremonies. Wherever I went was a flicker of candles. I was Pope o' Rome.

But somehow when I sat on the cushions of state with scarlet cardinals and courtiers swarming all about, when I walked in processions with a twinkling of candles dancing before my eyes, or when I lay tossing in my bed at the hour of moonrise—somehow I remembered the mountains, and the lights that peeped out like stars in the valley at evenfall, and the tinkling of sheep-bells on the mountain-paths, and the sleepy twittering of birds, and the Almighty God.

So one day I said: "Here. I am sick of this." And I gave up my raiment and treasure-coffers, all. And I said to them: "For all the jewels that twinkle in the belly of the earth, I would not be Pope o' Rome."

Then I departed.

And now by the grace of the Almighty God, I shall die in the mountains. By the grace of the Almighty God, I shall die there where I dwelt for five-and-fifty years, and I shall hear once more the tinkling of sheep-bells on the hillside and the twittering of birds, and know once more before I die the dark wonder of evenfall in the mountains.

By the grace of the Almighty God.



**T**HE worst enemies are flatterers, and the worst flatterers are friends.



# MRS. SMYTHE'S ARTISTIC CRISIS

By Charles Divine

## I

FOR a month I had seen the shoddy-looking man in and about the neighborhood of one of the Hudson Tube entrances, and every day when I was so unfortunate as to cross his path he would come sidling up to me, saying tremulously: "Can you spare me the price of my fare to Jersey?"

His breath bore almost tangible proof that he had consumed the equivalent of so many return trips to Jersey that if they had all been laid end to end they would have reached around the world.

And yet there he was, day after day, begging for the price of his fare to Jersey, and still no nearer his much-desired destination than on the first day he had accosted me.

Somehow he came to remind me of Mrs. Smythe—Mrs. Philip Worthing Smythe, not that I mean to infer that she was given to tippling, but that she struck me as being the most ultramodern type of beggar: the intellectual panhandler.

She was always beseeching one for the latest news of this artist or that poet or the other novelist; what was the title of his last work?—please to give her an analysis of it—tell her in a few words what the book was about and how it had reacted upon you; and so on, until one made the startling discovery that she had set herself up to be an authority on all the fine arts and that her only preparation for descanting on these subjects was the acquisition of eleemosynary trifles doled out to her by her friends and acquaintances. And the journey of her soul was always at its starting point.

When she went to the opera she taxed her companions with the task of always pointing out to her the persons she should have known by sight, but invariably forgot.

"I simply can't remember faces," she explained. "Who is that woman in the box next to the Vanderbilt's?"

And, probably for the twentieth time that season, she would be told that it was Mrs. Kenneth Gary or Mrs. Rexford Titus. Her friends said as a joke that if put to the test she might fail to recognize her own husband.

It was art, however, that hit her hardest. Fashion came next, and because art had become the fashion, and to sculp was the thing, she decided that she wanted to take up sculpture.

A friend directed her to a modern school. It happened to be Carrington's. She contracted to take lessons with him, and he later told me his first impression of her.

"She landed in front of my place in her limousine, of course," he said. "I think there were six color tones in her costume, although it may have been only the whirring of the motor that I heard. I can understand her having a certain vogue, because she is good looking, but artistic—oh, oh! so are billboards, and bungalows, and wild men of Borneo! She hopped all over my place, like a sparrow with neurasthenia, from one room to another—'what is that poster? Is this a statue by Monet? Is that pink picture by Meunier?' She had the names all right, except that Meunier is the sculptor and Monet is the painter. 'And this—it must be a cubist; it's so tangled up, you know.'"

Carrington explained to me that she

had much money, and that he had little and needed all the pupils he could get; so he admitted her to the school and outlined the work to her.

"The life class meets on Thursday night," Carrington told her.

"How providential!" she exclaimed. "It fits in exactly with my plans at home. I never have anybody in Thursdays; that is my butler's evening off."

Carrington muffled his mirth for the sake of her millions, and Mrs. Smythe went away enraptured and intensely eager for the first lesson.

## II

MRS. SMYTHE discovered that in a little street near Washington Square a long line of stables was being converted, through the ministry of carpenters and builders, into a row of studios. Going there at once, she gazed delightedly at the stucco walls and the brick arches; the walls were "effective," the bricks were "darling"; but oughtn't there to be a little more decoration to break up the monotony of that plain whiteness?

The laborer to whom she put this question evinced no personal concern in the ornamental shortcomings of the new structures.

It was no skin off'n his knuckles, he said.

After selecting the studio she liked best, which was the one with the biggest arches and the most embellished, she made arrangements with the agent to lease it, and her willingness to pay the exorbitant price he first asked her, in order to test the elasticity of her purse-strings, astonished him and resulted in his demanding more of the next tenant who came looking for studios. Thus do the Mrs. Smythes assist the real estate dealers and make the lot of the less wealthy the harder!

She came to her first life class a-thrill. She had pencil and charcoal sticks and an elaborate leather-bound sketch book.

Taking a seat on one of the camp-stools in a corner of the big, bare room,

she looked around, fascinated at the white, plastered walls, the rude benches, the old stove at one side, and the pupils: some, eager-faced young men and women, who had all they could do to scrape together the twenty-five cents' admission fee for the evening; others, middle-aged men, such as that one in the far corner, with the thin, gray hair, the spectacles, and the pipe! How quaint! She thought to herself that here she was in workaday Bohemia!

It required no length of time at all for her to remark the matter-of-fact scrutiny which the students directed at the model, who happened to be a man of rather stocky build.

As soon as Mrs. Smythe saw his broad back, with a flush mantling in her cheeks, she forced herself to think: how like a Greek god! And she concentrated all her efforts on trying to adopt the attitude of earnest indifference to his nudity which the other students fell into naturally as an academic prerequisite: to see him merely as a part of the platform, as a fixture of the wall he stood outlined against; to regard the lines and not the face. She had just begun to make futile little marks on her paper when the voice of the monitor sounded: "Change pose!" and the model shifted his position.

There were six poses of five minutes each, then a rest, and after that came fifteen-minute poses, all of which Mrs. Smythe found of too brief a duration to enable her to put anything in her sketch book that approximated a likeness to the model's lines.

One reason for her inability to achieve a complete sketch was that she was lost in wonderment every now and then:

"What would Albert think, if he knew?"

Albert Smythe, her husband, was a paper manufacturer. (But the supply of drawing material had nothing to do with her taking up art.) He was a practical man who responded to all inquiries regarding himself by saying: "I'm a business man!" as if that ex-

plained everything. He would have suffered enormously from shock if he had known that his wife was spending a part of her Thursday evenings in a life class.

Accordingly Mrs. Smythe told Carrington always to send any messages to her at her studio. She had informed her husband of the studio she had taken, and he had replied that as long as she kept within her allowance he didn't mind her building a playhouse; everybody had to have their hobbies.

The first day she attended the class in sculpture she had thought to attract attention to herself by the careless remark that she was sorry she was late, but had just managed to tear herself away from luncheon at the Ritz. It fell flat; no signs of awe or interest were apparent in the mien or manner of the other students; they went on modelling, engrossed in their tasks; the girl next to her, a little red-haired Socialist, with her waist and skirt thrown off, sliced her lump of clay with the modelling tool as if there were no such places as the Ritz or such persons as Mrs. Smythe.

The next time the class met Mrs. Smythe hastily threw off her skirt and revealed a gorgeous petticoat of an exclusive design. But even this failed to draw the eyes of the other pupils, and eventually Mrs. Smythe was compelled to go ahead with her work without succeeding in causing anyone to pay her the homage she was used to.

She consoled herself with the reflection that if these students were so phlegmatic in awarding a modicum of worship to the glory of her social chariot, well, there were others, her friends uptown, whose eyes would be popping out of their heads in mirific admiration.

These were the ones whom she invited to her studio for tea.

"I feel more like talking in my studio than at home," she told them. "The atmosphere of the work, the freeing of the personality suffuses a spirit here . . . ."

The day Carrington called there, at her request, he found several model-

ling stands scattered about picturesquely. Amorphous bulks of clay and plasticine had been tossed on them and patted this way and that into the semblance of an unfinished work. Sheets adorned two of them in strict verisimilitude. There were candles and hangings, a couch, a tea table, chairs and stools. It "looked" all right, said Carrington, but it "talked" all wrong.

At length he felt it his duty to tell Mrs. Smythe, he said, that she couldn't learn art in a day or a fortnight, no matter how much she paid for it or how many studios she rented, that she would have to labor at it for years and even then she might never amount to anything. She broke down and cried; it was so discouraging; she thought it would come easier. How did these other women who were "doing things" get along so well? They worked hard or they had talent, replied Carrington. The upshot of it was that Mrs. Smythe said she would keep on working, oh! so hard, and that she would retain her studio just the same as a sanctuary sacred to art, in which to give tea in the afternoon and talk about when she was somewhere else in the evening, and that she would continue in the life class. She wouldn't give that up for the world; she was learning "so much."

### III

IN the Spring Mrs. Smythe was laid up with an attack of the grip, and her physician ordered her not to leave the big house in Madison Avenue. When Thursday evening came she sat alone in the library disconsolate over missing the sketch class.

The butler appeared in the doorway. "I thought you had gone, Simmonds," she said. "It is your evening off, you know."

"I know, ma'am," said Simmonds, "but owing to your indisposition I thought I would remain in the house and do you the favor, if you wished it, of posing here for you, ma'am."

Mrs. Smythe looked up, surprised.

"What—how—you know about my sculpting, Simmonds?" She was pleased.

He nodded.

"I couldn't very well help it, ma'am."

"But how did you know?"

"Surely you must have recognized me, ma'am—down at the school."

"*You* there, Simmonds?" She thought at once of the middle-aged man with the spectacles who used to sit in the far corner, and yet, could that have been Simmonds? Could she have let her studied efforts to sketch as the others had, blind her to this incongruous actuality?

"Yes, ma'am," said Simmonds. "I was the *model!*"

Mrs. Smythe caught her breath.

A flush came to her face, and a quickly mounting fever started at her feet and raced through her whole body, while to her mind flashed the picture of the model, that stolid figure, even as Simmonds was stolid; that stalwart form that had stood and knelt and reclined with such fixity of pose. She had never seen the butler in it, removed as he was from his customary environment, shorn of his buttons, his uniform: an undreamed-of metamorphosis; she had thought him just a man, a Greek-like man, and she had not examined the face as she had the splendid lines of that heroic figure.

Besides, as she had remarked often enough, she couldn't remember faces.

"Simmonds!" she cried.

"Yes, ma'am," he went on, unruffled. "It is what I regard as genteel work, and by no means difficult of accomplishment for one who is patient, as I am, ma'am. Only two hours of an evening, and in return I receive lessons in drawing after the class is dismissed. Mr. Carrington takes an interest in me. I noticed you the first night you came in with your sketch book, ma'am, though naturally I never said anything about it."

"Simmonds! . . . My—my smelling salts . . ."

"Yes, ma'am."

He looked on perplexed, while Mrs. Smythe leaned back in her chair in a

state of mental collapse—or rather, a soul cave-in.

At last she said:

"You realize, Simmonds, that after this you must go."

"To the school, you mean?"

"No! From my employ."

"Why—begging your pardon, ma'am, but I don't understand."

"Surely, Simmonds, you don't expect to stay on here after this? How can I retain a butler whose—whose figure I have looked at in such—oh, Simmonds! How stupid of you! Haven't you any sense of shame? Any sense of decency? Of the fitness of things? It—it would be immoral of you to want to remain in my house after this."

"Is there anything wrong, ma'am? Are you dissatisfied with my posing? Mr. Carrington assures me that I possess the finest torso he ever saw and—"

"Simmonds! Leave the room or I shall faint!"

He fled at the panic in her voice. There was a quizzical look on his face, that face that was usually so stoical in its expression—a physiognomy that would have remained immobile if a pink and white hamadryad, stark naked, had come tripping up the steps to the front door, rung the bell, and asked to see Mrs. Smythe, to which Simmonds would have retorted: "Who shall I say is calling, Miss?"

Unable to diagnose the crisis through which Mrs. Smythe was now passing, Simmonds stood in the servants' hall pondering her sudden access of emotion.

He was soon summoned back to the library.

"Simmonds, don't say a word!" began Mrs. Smythe. "Just listen to me. I have thought it all over, and the problem resolves itself to this: am I to give up my art or are you to give up your position in this house? I realize that you have been with us a long time and that you have served us faithfully, although I might raise the point that on your evenings off, which we were led to believe you spent with your family, you—you didn't spend them

with your family. I dislike to have to explain the circumstances in detail to Mr. Smythe, but surely I can promise you that if you go to Mr. Smythe and tell him that you want to resign, for private reasons of your own, he and I will both see to it that you get a good character and a suitable recommendation to some other house. I don't expect you to understand the delicacies of my viewpoint, the subtle nuances which color the situation"—this was a garbled echo of an art talk she had once heard—"but at least you may believe me when I say that the progress of my work under Professor Carrington would be incompatible with—with the continuation of you in your present dual capacity of—of . . . ."

She lost her grip of the cumulative argument, and her words trailed off indecisively. . . . "You may speak now, Simmonds."

But Simmonds couldn't speak.

The mystery of the dialogue had got beyond him; the waves had passed over his head and engulfed him.

"All I can say, ma'am," he suggested, "is that I regret exceedingly that I did not come to you sooner. I could

have rendered you valuable assistance. Now, take my right leg, for example. Mr. Carrington showed me some of your sketches, which I trust you will pardon my saying, ma'am, and you never got my leg right. Of course I do not pretend to know how to *teach* drawing, and a knowledge of technique is not necessary to a general understanding of proportion, but I know when a thing *looks* right and I know my own leg—"

"Stop!" commanded Mrs. Smythe. "I don't want to hear anything more about that. It has nothing to do with the question, which is whether or not you will look for another position. If you insist upon harping on the art topic I will have no other course but to discharge you myself and at once."

Simmonds bowed.

"I will go then, ma'am."

He moved toward the door with resignation in his countenance.

Then, with a last look around, he said sorrowfully:

"I understand how it is now. Good-by, ma'am. It is too bad there cannot be *two* artistic people in the same household!"



## NOCTURNE

By Harold Hersey

A WINTER night of still, cold stars . . . .  
The village homes row after row  
Are wide awake, their unclosed eyes  
Look out upon the snow.

The warm breath of each little house  
Curls slowly upward in the air;  
Beneath our feet the creaking snow  
Is crusted everywhere.

The icy trees are very still,  
Each stands there like an armored knight  
Who peers in stately silence through  
The keen, blue air of night.

## AT MIDNIGHT

By Manchester Willdy

"**C**LARA will be surprised to have me home tonight!" mused Gabriel Squibbs as he mounted the veranda steps toward midnight. He stepped into the shadow of a pillar as a muffled footfall sounded suddenly on the gravel path.

After an instant's waiting a dark form bounded up the steps, fumbled for a pause at the door-lock, and then entered the silent, dark Squibb mansion.

Gabriel Squibbs drew a large handkerchief from his pocket and mopped his moist forehead; then an expression of anger replaced the fright in his eyes and with balled fists he quickly followed.

In the hall he stopped to take his revolver from a cabinet, then hurried on into the darkness, an unreasoning, blind rage suffocating him.

"I'll kill him," he muttered, as he

stalked his prey through the darkness. "He evidently didn't expect my return tonight."

Close ahead the intruder stumbled over some piece of furniture and cursed as he picked himself up.

Instantly the door of his wife's boudoir opened, and she stood, clad in a becoming negligee, upon the threshold.

"Oh, is that you, darling?" sweetly his wife addressed the strange man. "I sent you word as soon as I learned that Gabriel was to be out of the city another night." She circled his neck with both of her soft arms and drew him to her.

In the hall, Gabriel Squibbs collapsed weakly against the wall.

"God!" he breathed hoarsely, the revolver dropping from his nerveless fingers, "I—I thought he was after my collection of stamps."



**W**HEN flattery misses its mark, the fault is always with the flatterer. Competently launched, it never fails.



**V**IRTUE . . . Vice. . . . The difference is principally due to the superior lung-power of the Puritans.



**T**HE language of love is always inarticulate: a kiss, a blush, a low surprised whistle.



## E. D

By Wyndham Martyn

### I

IT was not until his married sister took a country house in England one summer that young Roger Eastham forsook Narragansett and Point Judith for a season of polo on English fields.

He was particularly glad to hear that his sister, knowing of an earlier hero-worship of his for a certain dashing player, Captain Knyvett, had asked that cavalryman to make one of the house party gathered at the historic castle that she was temporarily occupying.

"I've had to ask Mrs. Knyvett too," she complained.

"Why not?" Roger returned. "She won't bother me. It's the husband I want to know."

"But you must remember you're not a youngster any longer," his sister made answer. "You're better looking than a man ought to be and you have more money than you know what to do with. Also you've cared so little about women that when you do begin to take notice of them you're due for an awful cropper."

Roger stooped down and kissed her. She was a dozen years his senior and had rescued him from the consequences of a thousand childish pranks.

"Don't worry about me," he said. "It won't be the first time I've spoken to a pretty woman. I did not work *all* the time at Yale."

When the Knyvetts arrived he scarcely glanced at the slender and languid wife, having eyes only for the husband. Knyvett was a tall fellow, with gray eyes and dark hair and an expression about his eyes of sadness. In the saddle, the most dashing and courageous of players, he was revealed on this first

meeting as a quiet, unobtrusive man with a kindly smile.

"I've heard about you," he told the delighted Roger, "and they say your ponies are as fast as anything we've got over here. We shall have some ripping fun."

Mrs. Knyvett turned on him suddenly.

"Are you wrapped up like my husband in that awful game?"

Then, without waiting for his answer, she crossed the room to speak to a friend.

"My wife," Captain Knyvett explained, "is always afraid I'll get killed, but I never seem to have any accidents, although I've been insured against 'em for twenty years."

As his sister had said, Roger was a very good looking youth and women were not in the habit of looking through him as though he did not exist. They had bothered him a good deal in times past and he had sighed at their activities. But Mrs. Knyvett's manner was even less pleasing to him.

She had been at the castle a week before she addressed a word to him. Attracted to the music room by the sound of singing he had gone into it to find this pale-faced woman with purple eyes. She stopped as he came toward her.

"So it is the polo boy who interrupts."

"Who has come to hear you sing," he retorted.

"And what do you know about music?" she demanded.

"I don't sing or play," he admitted, "but I like the best."

She strummed a few bars.

"I know the kind," she said scornfully. "You like Verdi best and would

let Wagner be known to fame by 'Tannhäuser.' "

"I like the music you like," he said placidly. "That means I'm a modernist."

"What do you know about my likings?" she asked. "What have you heard about me?"

"Many things," he answered. "One is that you are a bishop's daughter."

She smiled. "You are older than I imagined. And perhaps wiser, too. I don't think I want to hear you talk just now, though. Sit there and don't come nearer. In that subdued light you look quite ornamental."

"But I want to hear you sing," he returned. "I shall be ever so grateful."

"I'd rather be grateful to you for leaving me," she answered. "I came in here to indulge in an E. D. to a musical accompaniment all by myself."

"What on earth is an E. D.?" he demanded.

"An emotional debauch if you will have it. I've had unpleasant news in a letter and I desire to work off the evil mood in solitude."

"I won't make a sound," he entreated.

"I shall probably E. D. to the point of tears. That means my nose will get red and I don't know you well enough to let you see me like that."

He rose reluctantly. And he wondered why he had not seen, on the first moment of meeting her, what glorious eyes she had.

"I don't believe anybody would write an unpleasant letter to you."

She laughed and looked him full in the face.

He saw that she had very small white teeth and a perfect mouth.

"The polo boy expands!" she cried, "I believe if I let him stay he would even be moved to make compliments. My dear child, don't you see my smiling face hides a broken heart?"

Then she turned her back on him and played the first few beautiful chords of Ravel's "Sainte."

He felt suddenly that he had been treated as a small boy.

She apparently did not notice that he had gone from the room.

## II

A FEW days later she surprised him by speaking. Her manner was unsmiling.

"Take me for a drive," she commanded. "If there's a mail phaeton and two reliable horses I prefer that to a dog cart. I'm always afraid of horses falling down when I'm in a two-wheeler."

She looked at her jewelled watch, a tiny affair set in a ring. "I shall be ready in exactly half an hour, but as I'm always late you are not expected to be punctual."

She kept him waiting so long that the horses, high-bred, fidgety creatures, were difficult to handle.

"They look most vicious brutes," she declared. "I don't believe you want me to come." She sat down on a stone wyvern by the door and surveyed them.

"If you'll only get in it will be all right," he said, a little crossly.

When she was safely seated and the groom had clambered perilously to the little seat behind, the horses tried to run away, and, had not Roger Eastham been strong of wrist, they might have succeeded. When he had quieted them he looked down at his companion's face expecting to find there some trace of fear.

"No," she said, reading his thought, "I am not in the least bit afraid. When my hour comes not even a *beau garçon* like you can save me."

For a half mile they drove in silence. Then she demanded their destination.

"Avonminster," he returned. "A saddle of mine has to be repaired."

"Why stick out your chin in that obstinate manner?" she asked. "Are you afraid I shall ask you to shun towns and take me only along leafy lanes? I'm afraid you add conceit to ill temper."

Her charge was so grossly unfair that he laughed.

"I'm afraid that E. D. wasn't very satisfying when you last spoke to me."

"That night in the music room you mean? It wasn't. You spoiled it. I went to my room instead and wrote a letter which I've just decided to mail."

She held it up so that he could see the address. "Do you know who that is?"

"Who doesn't?" he retorted, reading the name of a French playwright and poet as renowned for his amours as for his genius.

"Then you'll be surprised to hear it's partly about you. Please don't talk for another milestone. I want to think."

She had written only a few lines to the poet. She had congratulated him on his new volume of verse and called to mind their first meeting when she was finishing her education in Paris ten years before and he had not been so famous.

"Perhaps you taught me, *cher Maître*," she had written, "but I, too, have a passion for studying innocence and beauty. There is an Antinoüs here who needs, as you told me I did, all those years ago, to have his soul set ablaze with its own glory."

"The milestone is at hand," Roger said a few minutes later.

"You exceed all speed limits," she retorted with an air of severity.

"If I'd a pair of my father's trotters here I'd have done the mile in half the time. These hackneys may have the looks, but our trotters have the speed. I don't like you in these silent moods."

"I suppose it never occurred to you," she responded, "that a woman is often silent if she is unhappy?"

"You ought not to be," he declared. "You have looks, money, youth; you sing like an angel and your husband's the best number one in the country."

"That is an admirable training for matrimony no doubt," she retorted.

Roger thought he understood. She was jealous of the time Knyvett spent in the saddle. When he wasn't playing polo he was fox-hunting, and before he retired from the army he was in a cavalry regiment and probably kept

himself busy in seeing his troop horses were kept in condition. He strove to do Captain Knyvett justice.

"Weren't you ever keen on riding or that sort of thing?"

She shook her head.

"When I was young, my father had a city parish, a horrid manufacturing town in Lancashire where there wasn't any necessity for horses. It wasn't until I was in Paris that Mr. Balfour offered him a bishopric. I was too old to learn then to become good at it and I won't do things in a second-class fashion. As to my music, what good has that been to me? I play to people without understanding, and they chatter as they wouldn't do if they had paid half a guinea for a *fanteuil*. My husband thinks he's musical, but it's all Beethoven with him, and he'd rather listen to a school girl grinding out the adagio from the eighth sonata than hear anything modern like Debussy."

"I wish you'd try me," Roger said anxiously. "I told you I was a modernist."

"If I still like you after dinner tonight," she returned, "and you don't feel inclined to harrow your soul at auction, I'll let you hear me sing."

"Do you alter so quickly?" he said, reproach in his tone.

She snapped her fingers.

"As quickly as that, my polo boy. I get it from my right-revered sire, who is the holiest of terrors to all priests and deacons in his diocese."

She broke off frowning.

"What horribly slow horses these are! Or is it you drive them badly?"

He looked at her indignantly.

"They are going splendidly. How very changeable you are, Mrs. Knyvett."

She looked at him teasingly and laughed.

"I came out for a single purpose and as it is achieved I want to get back and have a cup of tea."

"I suppose if I asked what purpose it was you wouldn't tell me?"

"Indeed I would," she asserted.

It seemed to Roger that she had at

will the ability to take years off her age and change from gloom to radiant happiness.

"I came to find the exact age of the polo boy. In years he may be twenty-three, but in my standard of time he is seven or eight."

"And you?" he demanded. The experience of being laughed at was not wholly pleasant.

"Older than the hills among which we drive, a world-weary woman about whom you will speedily be warned. I am labelled dangerous."

"What utter nonsense," he cried hotly.

She smiled at him sweetly.

"Did I say seven or eight? It should have been three or four."

For all his love of horses Roger lashed his pair unnecessarily.

"So you've decided not to listen to my siren songs tonight?" she asked, and laughed when he flushed red. "I like youths of your type to be cautious."

"How is it you can read my thoughts? I was thinking that."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"It may be a sixth sense; it may be intuition." She looked at him through long lashes. "It may even be practice."

Then came another unaccountable change of mood.

"I happen to be a member of the R. S. P. C. A., and if you hit those dear horses again I shall have you arrested. They were going as fast as they possibly could."

Roger was minded to say dark things about woman's inconsistency, but felt he would be worsted in the duel. A cheerful, even temper was his best armor.

### III

At dinner Roger's brother-in-law, who had been losing at cards steadily for a week, suggested some music. He had an idea he was stale and a night's rest would bring his luck back.

Roger looked covertly at Mrs. Knyvett.

He wondered whether she were relieved that this arrangement would rob

him of the opportunity to hear her alone in the music room.

"I hope you'll sing," he whispered later when they were in the immense room.

"Why not?" she retorted. "At least some people will appreciate me. Tell Tommy Vivian to come and talk to me."

This meant that Roger would have to give up his seat.

"No," he asserted stubbornly. "I shall not sacrifice myself for Tommy." He was tired of being ordered here and there. "I shall stay here so that I can get a good view of you at the piano."

"What animals," she asked him, "are so cowardly alone but so bold in company?"

"Sheep," he answered, "and wolves."

She sang one of the *Cinq Poemes de Baudelaire* which Debussy had set to his entrancing music. Hers was easily the most notable performance of the evening, although there were other guests unusually skilled in making music.

During the week that followed she paid little attention to Roger Eastham. There were other men to whom, in her peculiar manner, she was markedly gracious. It seemed to him that he was gaining the power to see behind her brighter moods an eternal sorrow.

And sometimes he thought she looked so slight and frail. He decided that Captain Knyvett neglected her shockingly. Once he came upon them obviously in the midst of some species of quarrel. He thought that he had never seen a sterner face than that of the cavalryman. It was less than an hour after that that she came upon him near the stables.

"I must walk," she declared abruptly, "or else an E. D. will seize me."

They had gone in silence for half a mile ere she spoke again.

"You saw me quarrelling with Dick?"

"I hardly saw as much as that," he answered in confusion.

"You did," she asserted, "and I want

to ask on your word of honor if you heard what we said."

"On my honor not a coherent word," he cried, relieved, and wondered why her face lost its look of anxiety.

"I was afraid you had," she murmured. "I hide what I can, but sometimes it's too much. These scenes make me positively ill."

"Are they absolutely necessary?" he asked, hesitating.

He was filled with pity that she should have to endure any suffering. He admired her loyalty when she tried to smile brightly, and assured him that it was all right.

Roger had come unconsciously to lose that regard he had formerly cherished for the famous polo star. Once his sister remarked upon it, for it was not Roger's way to conceal what he felt.

Before they returned, Mrs. Knyvett laid her hand on his arm.

"Promise me," she entreated, "that you will never say anything of this, not even to your sister."

"What you tell me is sacred," he said solemnly.

She smiled at him a little sadly.

"It's rather nice, even for a capricious, ill-tempered woman like me, to feel she has one dear, generous-hearted boy on her side."

Roger was saddened at the thought of her suffering. His generous heart grew tender when he pictured her loneliness. He was witnessing, he assured himself, the tragedy of a loveless and childless marriage.

Two days had passed, during which he had not had a word with her—for it was a vast house, and many guests were in it—when he received a note.

"Dear Polo Boy," it ran, "why have you deserted me? Did you know I played the organ? I am going to after dinner tonight. Lots of stupid people are coming to dinner from the surrounding country. There will be a dozen tables for auction. I am not going to play. Why not come and hear me play Bach at, say, ten o'clock?

"A. K."

It was not so easy for him to break away as he imagined it would be.

"You're needed for bridge," his brother-in-law declared.

"Why not ask Captain Knyvett?" he parried.

"He's writing a letter to *The Field* on conditioning hunters. If you cut bridge as you've been doing lately," the other observed vindictively, "your abnormally bad game will never improve."

As he opened the heavy oak door that led into the organ gallery, Roger felt that the woman who was softly playing was wrapt in the very mystic power of music. And he thought with contempt, as she smiled at him, that Dick Knyvett was even now inditing a letter to a sporting weekly paper on hunters!

Agatha Knyvett had looked more than ordinarily lovely at dinner in her Doucet gown of gray charmeuse with its tunic of beaded net, which had been fashioned to show her slenderness. She looked like a child, he thought.

"Good boy," she said, smiling. "I was beginning to be afraid of this loneliness. Of course you know this place is haunted. Sit by my side and help me to pull out the stops."

But she played very little. Presently she ceased and turned to Roger.

"I wonder what Dick is doing?"

"Neglecting you," he cried angrily. "Only once since I've been here have I so much as seen him talking to you. If I were in his place—"

She put a little hand over his mouth.

"Be careful," she warned.

A moment later she added: "I wonder why it is to you, of all the men I have known, I have—I have been weak enough to talk too about what I should have kept silent? I suppose it is because you have sympathy and understanding, Roger. I tried to be rude to you and keep you away, but it wasn't any good. I didn't want anyone to find out how he treated me."

It was impossible that he should not be flattered by her confession. But he

was vaguely uneasy that he had guessed so little of what she inferred.

"What do you mean?" he asked in a low tone.

She folded her hands on her knees and stared into the darkness of the great apartment.

"Oh, the usual things. Cruelty, neglect, other women."

"Cruelty?" he cried, startled.

She nodded.

"You see, I'm not athletic and muscular, and he likes that type. He's horribly strong, as everybody knows, and I suppose I exasperate him."

Roger's indignation took words from him.

"You wonder why I'm telling you this," she went on in an uneven voice. "It's because there's no other man in the whole world I can trust. It's because things have come to such a pass that I must have a friend. And I'm not a woman's woman, Roger. I want you to be sweet and kind—to be like a big strong brother. Will you?"

He felt a great overwhelming pity for this timid, shrinking woman, whose sufferings were more than he could comprehend. He put his arm on her shoulder with a big protecting gesture. But she snuggled into his arms with a sigh of content.

"I feel safe," she whispered, and pulling his head down kissed him.

"Darling!" he cried tenderly, "Darling!"

For a moment he held her thus, his heart beating against her own. Then she leaned forward and listened.

Below them, in the big room that had once been the refectory of an abbey, people were walking.

She freed herself from his clasp.

"Tomorrow," she whispered.

#### IV

As he passed through the rooms wherein the bridge players were gathered, seeing none, and conscious only of the kisses that still burned upon his lips, a hand was placed detainingly on his arm.

He looked down to see Knyvett's kindly face. To Roger it was now only a mask to deceive.

"Hello, Roger," Captain Knyvett cried cheerily, "had any luck? I've held nothing higher than the jack of clubs so far."

Roger passed him by as though he had not heard. His sister observing this, followed him with eyes of distress. He went straight to the room his sister had given him and flung himself into a chair. For the first time in his life he had experienced love. There had been flirtations often enough before, but here he was in love with a married woman, a woman the victim of a brutal husband.

He had sat there for an hour seeing no way honorably out of his difficulties when there came a knock upon the door.

It was Knyvett. He nodded easily to Roger and sank into a chair opposite, gazing with admiration at the rich carvings of the splendid room.

"Magnificent ceiling," he commented. "That carving would fetch something in one of those Fifth Avenue shops of yours."

Roger was still angry enough to be rude.

"Have you come to discuss a carved chestnut wood ceiling?"

Knyvett lighted a cigarette.

"That was only by the way," he answered gravely. "An hour ago I spoke to you and you chose to cut me. It wasn't an accident, was it?"

"Deliberate intent," said Roger coldly.

"And once or twice this week when we've been drawn on opposite sides you've ridden me off rather savagely—more savagely than the rules allow. Deliberate intent again?"

"Yes," said Roger.

Knyvett puffed at his cigarette a moment or two in silence.

"What's the grievance?" he demanded.

"Really," Roger returned with what politeness he could muster, "I don't know that I am anxious to discuss it with you."

"Look here, Eastham," Captain Knyvett said, with no show of anger, "I came here especially to discuss it and I think it's better to do so."

Roger looked at him sourly.

"It seems to me there is a threat in your manner."

Never had Roger seen that deceitful face wear more obviously its character of melancholy.

"I know what's the matter with you," the elder man said slowly. "I know exactly how you feel, or ought to feel, if you're the lad I take you for. You've been talking to Agatha a good deal lately."

"Have you been spying?" Roger demanded.

A trace of color passed over Knyvett's face, but his manner was still courteous.

"I am not a spy," he responded with dignity. "If I had been, it may be, my life would have been happier. I do not care to listen to any unnecessary rudeness on your part, so I will come to the point at once. My wife has been telling you, or if she hasn't yet it will come sooner or later, that I am cruel to her, that I neglect her, that she is not a woman's woman and for that reason needs a man friend who will be a protecting brother. Am I right?"

"I don't understand," Roger said lamely.

"Of course you don't," Knyvett told him. "How could a boy of your age and experience comprehend the cleverness of a woman like her? Whatever she has told you about me is false. Ask your sister, for example. She knows. That I have had any affairs with women since I married her is untrue. That I am physically cruel to her is simply damned nonsense. My life is pretty well known, Eastham. I was in the Eleventh Lancers when I married her and took her out to India when the regiment was ordered there. Ask any man or woman who knows service scandals whether what happened at Simla, Naini-Tal or Rawal-Pindi was of my invention. It ended in my having to chuck the army. Through influence I

became military attaché at Tokio, and the same sort of thing happened. It will always happen where she is. She's a devouring flame."

Knyvett laughed mirthlessly.

"And one of the ironical things about it is that the name Agatha means *good*, and her father's a bishop and a low-church bishop at that."

"Does she know you've told me?" Roger asked him.

"I've never told anyone yet so she probably won't suspect. Nobody told me until it was too late. Think of it, I read that wonderful poem—the ode of the great French poet to the woman with the Madonna eyes set in a Magdalen's face—and never suspected it was written of my wife—after his affair with her."

Knyvett relapsed into another silence.

"If England were a duelling country," he said presently, "I should probably spend my time fighting instead of trying to get my blessed neck broken at polo or in the hunting field."

Roger spoke hesitatingly.

"But if what you have said is true, and of course I believe you, why do you live with her? In America divorce is so simple."

"I said she was a flame, a devouring flame. Can you imagine a man weak enough to flutter about that flame, being unable to tear himself away as he should? And can you imagine a woman like Agatha knowing her power and refraining from using it? That's my tragedy. You can't understand it. I hope, my boy, you will never be able to. Knowing everything, I still love her."

## V

WHEN Captain Knyvett had gone, Roger's sister stole into the room so softly that he did not see or hear her until she spoke.

"Dreaming?" she asked.

"Yes," he answered, "but you woke me. I dreamed I was a full-fledged man of the world and understood women."

# THE HANDY LETTER WRITER

By Laura Kent Mason

I CANNOT believe that I am insane. I take care of my household. I make rational purchases. My conversation is sensible, even, at times, I like to believe, entertaining. Emotionally, I am neither intense nor indifferent. Yet, when my pen touches a sheet of correspondence paper, when I am writing to a masculine acquaintance, my seeming sanity departs.

In thanking a sand-colored youth for a small box of roses of a color of which I am not particularly fond, do I write "I thank you so much for your pleasant remembrance?" No. I write, instead:

"Boy dear: Your flowers came—just now. Because they are from you, they mean so much to me, so much more than I can write. I wish that you were here, now, so that I might tell you how happy they have made me. . . ."

A dapper little fellow, whom I like only indifferently, has asked me to dinner. I have another dinner engagement. Over the 'phone, I might regret, casually, with a "so sorry." In a note, I tell him:

"Need I tell you how badly I feel and how desolate Tuesday evening will be for me? Always, it seems, in my life, it is the necessary, tiresome things that I must do, never the pleasant, alluring ones that would bring me happiness . . ."

A stupid old man sends me a box of candy. I am not eating candy this year,

as a sacrifice to circumference and, anyhow, he sent the kind of candy I never liked—colored bonbons. I gave the box to my cook, days ago. This is what I write as a thank you:"

"You are such a dear to think of me. No wonder everyone loves you so. I am quite jealous of the many people who care for you—and yet, how can we all help caring, you are so thoughtful of others. Your delicious bonbons are only another evidence of your kindness. I am nibbling one now. Won't you drive by, some evening soon, so that I can tell you what I think of them—and you? . . ."

To a boy, who writes me scrawled, characterless letters, I reply:

"You must know that I always want to hear from you, am interested in you, understand you. Your letters made you seem so close to me. I am glad you told me of your golden dreams. You must do splendid things with your future, things to justify my faith in you. . . . You understand me as few people do. I have shown you a side of me that others do not know."

Ten pages of it!

What if my letters were ever published? How could I face my friends again? After I write them, are they preserved or destroyed, these letters? What if my husband should see them?

I keep on writing them.

And yet—I have seen the letters that other women write to men—and they are all much like mine. I cannot believe that I am insane.



# THE HAPPY YOUTH

By L. M. Hussey

**A**S the young man made his way along the crowded street more than one person turned to look after him. Sophisticated old men observed his face and shook their head with rather devilish grins, but none the less they envied him to a not inconsiderable degree and marvelled secretly at the blythe buoyance of his demeanour. They were certain they understood his thoughts and his fortune, and so some of them even pitied him a little.

Women sophisticated and otherwise, and particularly the fat women who witnessed his passage, sighed more or less and were envious to an extent which surpassed greatly this same emotion in the sophisticated old men. All these women were positive to a syllable what had given the face of joy to the young man and knew in their hearts what had happened to him.

But the youth himself was totally unconscious of his attention-arresting stroll. He could think only that he *was* happy and it seemed to him that he could notice the distinct voices of birds a-carol, although as a matter of scientific verity there were only a few sparrows squabbling over refuse and obscenely disporting themselves. To this young fellow, in addition, the sun had a glow of intensity he could not recollect having perceived heretofore, but again he was mistaken, for the section was a dense one and a smoke haze from the high manufacturing stacks reduced the sun to an almost second-rate luminary.

Smiling still to himself, he presently felt that he was hungry and he turned into a café. The place was crowded and an orchestra was playing and having come at the busiest moment of the

noon period he was assigned to a very inferior station with a swinging door at his back giving ingress to the kitchen, noisy and a little smelly. Nevertheless the young man noticed no disadvantages of any sort. He was indeed ravished by the strains of music coming to him uncertainly and obliquely, and as the violinist completed a solo part he applauded lustily. Within him he decided that the man was surely a virtuoso with the facility of an Elman or a Kreisler. He had heard both these masters and he was certain of his judgment, but as a matter of truth he was wholly wrong, for the fellow in the orchestra had a poor ear and played off key and received twelve dollars a week, which was more than he was worth. However, the young man did not realize that he had been in a normal mental frame when he heard the *maestri*, whereas now he was in a condition of insane exultation.

They served him at last a cocktail; it was bitter because the bar-tender had been pressed for time and had made a slip with the vermouth, but the young man sipped it and wondered why he had never discovered the peculiar virtue of this establishment's drink-mixing ages before. This was only another instance of his aberration.

Although he was nearly hidden in his obscure corner, a few people dining at the near tables could observe him and he interested them in precisely the same fashion as he had engaged the attentions of the pedestrians. There were, in fact, among the diners, some sophisticated old men and some women sophisticated and otherwise, and all of them envied him, and particularly the women, and especially the fat women.

These people all had it perfectly fixed in their minds just what the young man was thinking about and what made him so joy-countenanced.

The waiter who served him did not fail to note his bearing. He called the attention of other waiters and as each servitor came out the swinging door he took the trouble to glance at the young man and sometimes smile a little and occasionally chuckle half to himself. Everyone of the waiters was positive that he had the young man's secret and understood the spring in his heart.

Everybody believed him or herself at

the bottom of the young man's mind. But they were all wrong; no one guessed.

These observers had it down with the sharpest certainty that this young chap had just proposed to some pretty maiden and had been accepted and had kissed her and left her and was brimming with happiness.

He was brimming with happiness but he had proposed to no one. As a matter of fact he had just come from a court-room where he had been granted a decree of absolute divorce from his wife! . . .



## THE IDEAL

By June Gibson

I AM thirty.

I have had many suitors, but I am unmarried.

Once when I was a little girl I was taken to see *Romeo et Juliette*.  
We sat in a box.

During the balcony scene, I gazed at Romeo, rapt with adoration.  
When the curtain fell, he threw me Juliette's rose.

I did not see him again until the other day.

I was visiting friends in the country.

Some strange noises attracted my attention.

I strayed off in the direction of the sounds, and came upon a big quarry.  
I saw him with some other convicts crushing large stones.

I have had many suitors, but I am unmarried—

And I am thirty.



EVERY man of forty divides women into two classes; those it would be pleasant to love, but dangerous, and those with whom it would be neither pleasant nor dangerous.



THE fact that men fall in love with women is proof enough that they do not understand them.



TIMIDITY: the physical inability to do what your mind has already done.

# SIMPLETTE

By Arthur Dourliac

**S**IMPLETTE était une petite mendiane, sans famille, sans asile, sans pain, sans beauté, sans esprit, ce pourquoi on l'applait Simplette.

A défaut d'autre état civil, ce nom lui était resté et elle y répondait de bonne grâce.

Aussi favorisée de la nature, de la naissance, de la fortune, Simplette eût dû s'estimer fort malheureuse.

Mais le Seigneur n'a-t-il pas dit :

—Heureux les simples d'esprit!

A l'encontre de tant d'enfants riches, gâtés, aimés, choyés, comblés de tous les dons, enveloppés de toutes les ten-  
dresses, qui sont constamment maus-  
sades, boudeurs, mécontents de tout  
et de tous, Simplette était toujours  
contente, supportant gaiement le  
chaud, le froid, le soleil, la pluie,  
la faim, la soif, une chanson aux  
lèvres, le ciel dans les yeux, des fleurs  
à la main.

Simplette adorait les fleurs dont elle faisait de gros bouquets pour vendre à la porte des Eglises et sur le passage des processions, mais, timide et point har-  
die, elle se tenait à l'écart, n'osant har-  
celer les nobles seigneurs et les belles  
dames, comme ses petits compagnons,  
et souvent elle ne récoltait pas une obole.

Mais elle s'en consolait facilement en invoquant dévotement la madone et en déposant à ses pieds le trop-plein de son panier et de son cœur.

Et ni fleurs ni prières n'étaient per-  
dues.

Un jour, une vieille femme au chef  
branlant, au visage ridé et parcheminé,  
aux petits yeux brillants sous son ca-  
pucine, s'arrêta sous le porche au moment  
où l'enfant arrangeait ses bouquets dans  
sa corbeille.

—Oh! les belles fleurs! comme elles sentent bon!

—En désirez-vous, madame?

—C'est que je n'ai pas d'argent, ma petite.

—Ça ne fait rien, madame, et si cela vous fait plaisir. . . .

—Alors, tu m'en fais cadeau? . . .

—Bien volontiers.

—Ouais! tu es généreuse, ma fille, car tu pourrais les vendre. . . .

—Ce n'est gnère probable! En tout cas, une de plus ou une de moins! . . . Je n'en serai pas moins riche et vous en serez plus contente.

—Comment te nommes-tu, petite?

—On m'appelle Simplette.

—Tu as des parents?

Notre Père qui est au ciel.

—Eh bien! Simplette, ma mie, j'ac-  
cepte ton bouquet et je t'en remercie.

Et elle s'éloigna.

Derrière elle, les gamins se moquèrent de la fillette:

—Tu fais des cadeaux à la vieille Léonarde qui est méchante, quinteuse et si riche qu'elle pourrait payer ton éventaire au centuple, si elle n'était aussi avare. Elle cache un trésor et elle se prive de tout; elle pourrait habiter un palais, elle loge dans une mesure; elle pourrait avoir de beaux habits et elle est vêtue comme une pauvresse; elle pourrait faire bonne chere et mange des rogatons; enfin, elle vit plus chichement que le plus pauvre d'entre nous.

—Alors j'ai raison de lui faire l'aumône d'un bouquet! répondit tranquillement Simplette.

\* \* \*

Dame Léonarde avait, en effet, une fort vilaine réputation, sur laquelle chacun renchérisait à l'envi, à com-

mencer par ses neveux, cousins et cousines, aux yeux desquels son principal défaut était assurément son obstination à vieillir.

Néanmoins, ils la comblaient de soins, de prévenances, de cadeaux, dans l'espoir de l'emporter dans son esprit . . . et dans son testament.

Elle, fort habilement, entretenait cette émulation qui lui rapportait tant de petits profits, vantant à l'un l'empressement de l'autre, et vice versa.

Aussi chacun, craignant de se laisser dépasser dans ce steeple-chase, multipliait visites et présents.

Dame Aloyse, la pâtissière, lui envoyait ses plus succulentes tartelettes; maître Rigobert, le boucher, ses plus fins morceau; dame Hubertine, la tailleuse, lui confectionnait de moelleuses douillettes; maître Ambroise, l'apothicaire, la bourrait de pâtes et de sirops, peut-être avec l'espoir inavoué d'une indigestion mortelle.

Mais la vieille n'y entendait pas malice et acceptait tout "d'aussi bon cœur que cela lui était offert."

—Comme vous me gâtez tous, mes chers enfants! répétait-elle souvent. Et moi, au moins, je sais que ce n'est pas pour ma fortune; je suis si pauvre!

—Oh! certes, ma tante, c'est bien désintéressé!

—C'est ce qui en fait le mérite, beau neveu. C'est égal ça me chagrine de n'avoir pas un petit souvenir à vous laisser . . . oh! un rien, mais auquel votre affection donnerait du prix en mémoire de moi.

—Assurement ma tante!

Et chacun se flattait IN PETTO d'être l'heureux élu.

\* \* \*

Dame Léonarde trépassa enfin!

Le jour des obsèques, très simples, puis qu'elle n'était plus là pour les voir, comme le cercueil passait sous le porche de l'église, Simplette, à sa place habituelle, songea qu'il était bien triste de s'en aller ainsi sans une couronne, sans une fleur et, de même qu'elle avait fait l'aumône à la vivante, elle la fit à la morte et déposa son plus beau bouquet sur la bière.

A l'issue de la cérémonie, les héritiers se réunirent autour du notaire, dépositaire du testament de la défunte.

Dame Léonarde commençait par remercier ses bons parents de toutes les marques de tendresse désintéressée qu'ils lui avaient données pendant sa vie et qu'elle aurait vivement désiré reconnaître après sa mort. Mais, hélas! elle ne laissait rien, absolument rien qu'elle ne dût à leur générosité, sauf, le vieux missel dont elle se servait depuis cinquante ans et qui était fort usé.

Si cependant ce souvenir de leur vieille parente avait quelque valeur à leurs yeux, elle le laissait à celui d'entre eux qui le réclamerait, ou, à leur défaut, à la petite Simplette qui lui avait fait don d'un bouquet.

—Grand bien lui fasse! gronda maître Rigobert en colère; un vieux bouquin pour tous mes bons gigots!

—Et moi pourtant de fines pâtisseries!

—Dire que j'usais mes doigts à lui coudre de chaudes pelisses!

—Et moi qui la gorgeait de réglisse et de juleps!

—Alors nul de vous ne réclame son legs?

—Certes, monsieur le tabellion, on ne se moque pas du monde à ce point!

—Et toi, petite? demanda le notaire à Simplette, qu'il avait mandée.

—Moi, je veux bien, monsieur. Je suis bien reconnaissante à dame Léonarde d'avoir pensé à moi, et je garderai son missel en mémoire d'elle.

Tous les autres se gaussaient de sa simplicité.

Mais le notaire, lui remettant le vieux livre avec un grand salut:

—Or donc, Simplette, ma mie, vous êtes héritière de ce missel et de tous les biens de dame Léonarde, montant à plus de dix mille écus, car il est écrit de sa main à la première page:

“A celui-là seul qui réclamera mon vieux missel appartiendra mon héritage.”

Et voilà comment furent déconfits les avides héritiers, et récompensé le désintéressement de Simplette.

## LEGEND'S END

By George Jean Nathan

TO applaud the practice of Mr. David Belasco in expending infinite care and time in perfecting the production of so empty and bootless a play as "Little Lady in Blue" is akin to an admiration for the sort of adult who triumphantly expends painstaking effort and time in putting together the several hundred little pieces of a picture puzzle. That such veneration is as without foundation as a tent is probably perfectly well appreciated by the folk who participate in it, yet the Belasco tradition dies hard and of that tradition this particular veneration is, one may believe, something in the nature of a death rattle. It is as if they who stand by the bedside, at a bit of a loss what nice to say, murmur gently, "But anyway—he had a good heart."

It is perhaps now a dozen years since the Belasco legend slid off the well-oiled ways and sailed gaudily forth, with flags flying and guns booming, into the gullibilities of the American public—a public already celebrated for having swallowed in high clover Madame Janauschek as a great artist, Richmond Pearson Hobson as a great naval strategist, Marion Crawford as a great novelist, Peter Jackson as a great prize-fighter and May Yohe as a great beauty. Nurtured by the gentleman himself with an even more scrupulous cunning than Barnum exercised in the exploitation of Jenny Lind, the Russian press bureau in preliminary *missa cantata* of the genius of Admiral Rodjestvenski or Mr. Ziegfeld in the glorification of Lillian Lorraine, the tradition fattened with the years and, fattening, established its creator in the American mind as a leading figure in the world's theater.

To the fattening of this tradition, Mr. Belasco was tireless in contributing albumenoids of various and succulent genres. First, by way of bequeathing to himself an air of aloof austerity and monastic meditation, he discarded the ordinary habiliments of commerce and, by the simple device of turning his collar hind end foremost, made of himself a sort of Broadway Rasputin, a creature for awe and pointings and whisperings. Arrayed so, he strode as a messiah among the peasants and, by putting on a show in a barn in El Paso, Texas, brought down the wrath of these esthetes upon the sack-suited infidels of the Syndicate who, very probably because his show wasn't so good or so much of a drawing-card in El Paso as the Byrne Brothers' "Eight Bells," denied him their El Paso mosque on the theory that if Mrs. Leslie Carter was a great artist then the whole darned artist business was Greek to them and they would just as lief take their chances on getting simultaneously into the Hall of Fame and the First National Bank with Nellie McHenry.

But this Belasco, a sapient fellow withal, knew well what he was about. The thing worked like a charm. And the yokelry, egged on by the ever naive and infatuated St. William Winter and other such credulous emotionals, raised cries of persecution and Belasco became, over night, the martyred Dreyfus of the American drama. High-salaried press agents who knew how suavely to soule and roget and bartlett were commissioned now to fashion compositions to be signed by Belasco and spread discreetly in the more literary gazettes. And by way of augmenting the aloof-

ness, the mystery, the remote melancholy and the artistic temperament of him, the monsignor sold now his old swivel chair, his old desk light with the green shade and the chromo of Ned Harrigan that hung on the wall and bought to take their places a Ming dais, an altar candlestick and a copy of the *Mona Lisa*. Carpets ankle-deep were laid upon the floor, the blinds were drawn and Valentine's entire stock of joss sticks set to smell up the place with a passionate Oriental effluvium. In that corner, a single wax taper, inserted artistically in a Limoges seidel, illumined the chamber with its ecclesiastic glow, and in that was glimpsed a single narcissus in a wistful crock. Upon the inlaid onyx commode that served as a desk rested carelessly a framed photograph of Dante, with the inscription "To my warm friend, Dave, in token of his services in the cause of art"—and duly autographed by the poet in that peculiar and unmistakable flowing hand of his. Outside the heavy bird's-eye maple door studded with large brass thumb-tacks, two small coloured bellboys impressed into service from a nearby hostelry and outfitted with green turbans and yellow togas, were made to sit cross-legged like twin gods of the mountain. And atop the door, to be set melodiously ringing at appropriate moments by a push-button neighbourly to Mr. Belasco's great toe, was arranged a set of chimes.

This restful chamber was christened a "studio" and, so was the news given out, it was here, amid these classic inspirations, that the Belasco withdrew from the sordid, work-a-day world to woo the muse. Among the muses that Belasco wooed in these surroundings was the muse of dramatic criticism, for here were bidden, from time to time, with much flourish and ado, much subtle greasing and tony flim-flam, the newspaper theatrical writers. One at a time, and after much stunning hocus-pocus, were these gentlemen received. When they entered, Mr. Belasco was invariably seen to be seated on the Ming dais, forefinger to brow, in atti-

tude of profound and impressive meditation. All was still as the tomb and dim, and but the thin spirals of the burning joss-sticks disturbed the solemn lull. Presently, as from a distance, though in reality hidden under the dais, a music box began a sweet and mellow lay. And as the music died away, a press-agent, secreted behind a heavy Beloochistan portière at R 1, made sweet sounds on a small whistle filled with water as of a canary singing.

Suddenly then, as if startled out of deep reverie, would the surprised Belasco become aware of his guest's presence. As some kindly and generous emperor, the Belasco would deign now bid the fellow near his throne and, putting the fellow at his ease, would express to the fellow his vast admiration for the fellow's critical and literary abilities and beseech his advice on how best to end the second act of the play he was even then working on. Allowing ample time for the grease to sink in good and deep, the Belasco would then descend in queenly abandon from the dais and sink wearily into the tufts of the Louis XIV *chaise* before the Louis XV table, meanwhile adroitly pressing the button under the table with his toe and setting the chimes over the door to dulcet playing. Followed now, *penseroso*, a lament on the crass commercialism of the theater, ending up, *allegro*, with a quotation from Shakespeare and another from a recent article written by the visitor. . . . An hour later, the newspaper writer might be seen on the boulevard cutting one of his old friends dead. . . . And the following Sunday might be seen in his gazette a four-column article attesting to the sovereign intelligence, learning, discernment, taste, artistry and genius generally of David Belasco, *maitre* and wizard *extraordinaire* to the American theater.

Gradually the legend, nursed and coddled now by an affectionately inscribed card at Yuletide, now it may be by a rarebit *à deux*, now mayhap by an irresistibly polite note of thanks for a favourable bit of written comment,

spread its wings in Forty-fourth street and flew with loud flutter far and wide across the countryside. Did the tradition perchance periodically show signs of drooping, then were *apéritifs* hustled to its reviving in the shape of a couple of recherché lamps hoisted in the aisles during the intermissions or in the shape of one of Gorham's country-house dinner gongs to signal the curtain's rise or in the shape of Reinhardt's old trick of sackcloth hangings for the boxes and proscenium during the presentation of a play of pious countenance or, more recently, in the shape of a series of profound essays on artistic stage illumination and like subjects (signed by Mr. Belasco, but written by Mr. Henry Irving Dodge) and in the shape of a legend-boosting autobiography written for the Belasco signature by a member of the Drama League.

As has been said, this ingenuous bait worked like magic and the yokelry swallowed it hook and sinker. For this Belasco was a clever man—the cleverest, and by all odds, in the native theater—and, doubtless chuckling up his sleeve, for it is impossible to imagine him deceived by his own tin-pantalooney—he witnessed the canonization of his simple humbug and through that simple humbug the canonization of himself by the absorbent rhapsodists. . . . But this was yesterday.

Already there is considerable evidence, even in the newspapers, of a grievous *lèse majesté*. One observes a profane grinning and head-shaking. And the Belasco legend shows signs of soon going to the foot of the class to join its comrades, the stork and Santa Claus, Friedmann the tuberculosis curer and Eusapia Palladino, Doctor Cook and Granville Barker, black hose with white feet and Italian vermouth, eugenics and neutrality, Phyllis Neilson-Terry and the Russian Army.

What now is becoming belatedly apparent to the hoaxed Hazlittry and its proselytes has, of course, been familiar these many years to everyone else. The facts, bereft of Ming sofas and perfumed punk sticks, are these. During

his activity as a producer, Mr. Belasco has produced not one-fifteenth so many worthy plays as the late Charles Frohman produced during a precisely corresponding period. Mr. Belasco has produced "The Easiest Way," "The Concert" and "The Phantom Rival"—three meritorious plays: so much and no more. As against these lonely three, he has presented an astounding procession of show-shop piffle including such things as "The Governor's Lady," "The Woman," "Seven Chances," "The Fighting Hope," "The Rose of the Rancho," "Adrea," "The Warrens of Virginia," "A Good Little Devil," "The Heart of Maryland," "May Blossom," "Peter Grimm," "The Music Master," "The Case of Becky," "The Heart of Wetonah," "Men and Women," "The Grand Army Man," "The Wife," "The Charity Ball," "Little Lady in Blue."

. . . A show-shop peg higher, but certainly of not authentic stature, have been his presentations such as "The Darling of the Gods," shilling melodrama in Morocco binding; "The Lily," one of the least interesting specimens of the modern French problem play; "The Boomerang," a pleasant but unimportant trifle; "The Auctioneer," not to be compared with the Montague Glass dramaturgy. . . . The financial success of most of these plays has, of course, no more relevance to the question of their artistic status than the financial success of the novels of A. N. and C. M. Williamson has to theirs.

During a like and parallel period of managerial activity, Charles Frohman, on the other hand, produced any number of plays of the order of "Peter Pan," "Mid-Channel," "The Legend of Leonora," "L'Aiglon," "The Silver Box," "Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire," "Preserving Mr. Panmure," "The Twelve Pound Look," "The Admirable Crichton," "The Mollusc," "The Hypocrites," "His House in Order," "A Wife Without a Smile," "Trelawney of the Wells," "The Importance of Being Earnest," "Chantecler," "The Tyranny of Tears"—the plays of such as Ibsen, Shakespeare, Pinero, Rostand, Barrie,

Fitch, Chambers, Galsworthy, Jones and Wilde as opposed to the Belasco catalogue of William C. De Milles, Roi Me grues, Edward J. Lockes, Clay Greenes, Lee Arthurs, Richard Walton Tullys, Wigney Percyvals and Victor Mapeses.

And Charles Frohman was and is not the only one. Winthrop Ames, who has been producing plays but a very short time in comparison with the lengthy career of Belasco, has in that brief period achieved a vastly more important position for himself through the presentation of such works as "Anatol," "Strife," "The Pigeon," "Prunella," "L'Enfant Prodigue," "Old Heidelberg," "Rutherford and Son," "Sister Beatrice," "The Thunderbolt," "The Piper." . . . William Faversham, during his few years as a producer, has done "The World and His Wife," "The Faun," "Othello," "Julius Caesar," "Herod" and "Getting Married," an honourable record marred only by the *flon flon* called "The Hawk." True enough, these producers have also on occasion presented plays quite as seedy as those presented by Mr. Belasco, yet such plays have in their repertoire been the exception, certainly not, as with Mr. Belasco, the rule. Harrison Grey Fiske has given the public twice as many substantial plays as Belasco. George Tyler has given the public three times as many substantial plays as Belasco. And what is more, these plays have been produced with a skill always equal to and often greatly superior to the productions of the latter. It will probably be agreed, for instance, that the latter's most adroit presentation of a good play was his production of "The Concert," indeed a brilliant endeavour. Yet it will doubtless also be agreed that Faversham's production of "Othello," Fiske's production of "Where Ignorance Is Bliss" and Ames' productions of "Strife," "The Piper" and "The Thunderbolt" were considerably better even in such matters of casting and detail in which Mr. Belasco is believed to excel. Again, was Belasco's production of "The Darling of the Gods" in any way superior

to the Fiske production of "Kismet"? Again, was Belasco's production of Hopwood's "Nobody's Widow" in any way superior to the Selwyns' production of Hopwood's "Fair and Warmer"? A few prettier lamps, maybe, but what else? Still again, was Belasco's production of Hurlburt's "Fighting Hope" in any way superior to the Nethersole production of Hurlburt's "Writing on the Wall"? And still again, is Belasco's present production of "Little Lady in Blue" in any way superior to Tyler's production of "Pomander Walk"? Or, in truth, as good?

To compare Belasco with such men as Antoine or Stanislavsky or Reinhardt—a fruity dido of the newspapers—is to compare Holbrook Blinn with Max Maurey, Ned Wayburn with Meyerhold or Butler Davenport with Victor Barnowsky. Such comparisons are, of course, altogether too absurd to call for serious notice. These producers are as far removed from Belasco as is Mr. Ziegfeld from Al Reeves. A mere glance at their records, records brave with the production of fine drama, development of fine acting and successful research and innovation in stagecraft, is sufficient to shrivel to the vanishing point even the best of Belasco's achievements. Beside such men, beside even such second-rate producers as Granville Barker or von Fassmann or Roebbeling, Belasco is a schoolboy in the art of the theater. And beside the inventiveness and imagination of such as Marstersteig, Gordon Craig, Adolph Linnebach, Livingston Platt or Hagemann, his inventiveness and imagination seem so much chintz. . . . But these are facts to be found by the bad sailor in the most accessible books of reference and I pose as no apothecary of news.

Mr. Belasco has contributed one—and only one—thing for judicious praise to the American theater. He has brought to that theater a standard of tidiness in production and maturation of manuscript, a standard that has discouraged to no little extent that theater's erstwhile not uncommon frowzy

hustle and slipshod manner of presentation. But what else? His plays, in the main, have been the sentimental vapourings of third and fourth-rate writers. He has produced none of the classics; he has produced not a single modern first-rate British play or French play or German play; he has produced but two Austrian plays and one of these he deleted of its two most striking factors; he has encouraged no young American talent and those young Americans whom he has encouraged, he has encouraged to write not dramatic literature but so-called sure-fire shows, lending to their manuscripts his fecund aid in devising superficial hokums and punches and other such stuffs of the two dollar vaudevilles; he has developed, in all his career, but one actress, Miss Frances Starr; he has developed, in all his career, but a single actor, David Warfield—and this single actor he has long since stunted by year in and year out revivals of the lucrative trash of Lee Arthur and Charles Klein.

Upon what, then, does his eminence rest? The circusing, after the manner of Oscar Hammerstein, of an inferior actress who had come before the public notice through a sensational divorce case; the promulgation, as original, of a system of stage lighting that had been in use a long time before all over Germany and had already been borrowed by producers in the theater of Russia; the promulgation, also as original, of a so-called ultra-realismus in stage settings which dates back to Charles Kean in the 1850's and which was elaborated to very nearly its present painful proportions by Otto Brahm in Berlin, if I am not mistaken, as far back as 1888 and carried even further two years later in the Moscow Art Theater; the divulgation, also as original, in 1902, of a scenic treatment of such a play as "The Darling of the Gods" already familiar to youthful students of a stage that years before had been occupied by Franz Ebert, Adolph Zink and the other imported lilliputians in an extravaganza called "The Magic Doll."

I have been Mr. Belasco's guest in

his theaters these many years. He has, with unfailing courtesy, regularly invited me to review his efforts and, with an equal courtesy, has uniformly assigned to the reception of my tender upholstery a most comfortable and well-placed seat—unlike the rude Mr. John Cort, who always, with shrewd and uncanny precision, sits me in an ulterior pew without any stuffing in it and, to boot, directly behind a very fat gentleman guest who is given, particularly at tense dramatic moments, to stupendous and disconcerting nose-blowings. I admire Mr. Belasco as a showman—he is probably the best and certainly the most successful in the Anglo-Saxon dramatic theater. Indeed, if ever I write a bad play, I promise him the first refusal of it. I admire him for having gauged the American *esthetik* as probably no other showman since Adam Forepaugh and Barnum has gauged it. And I admire him, further, for having done several really good things really well. But, though he has been ever to me an urbane host and though ever he has subtly flattered my sense of humour by hesitating to bid me inspect his "studio" or his first-edition E. Phillips Oppenheims or his collection of Byzantine soup ladles, I cannot but believe, albeit unmanerly, that he has by his many counterfeits worked a vast and thorough ill to the American playhouse and its drama. And I cannot but further believe that his legend is ending to the brightening of a new and more understanding dawn in the native theater.

"Little Lady in Blue" is, in many of its manifestations, a typical specimen of the Belasco dramaturgy. It is artificial, not in the properly appropriate sense that such a play as Jerome's "The Great Gamble" or Chesterton's "Magic" or Besier's "Lady Patricia" or Eleanor Gates' "We Are Seven" or Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest" is artificial, but in the sense that such things as "Brown of Harvard" and the Owen Davis *demi-drame* are artificial. And not merely artificial, but worthless. A pale distillation of the more flavourless juices of Louis N. Parker, the

comedy (an early nineteenth century fable), has been designed, it would seem, for the mere exploitation of a so-called star actress. Thus, it provides that actress, as its heroine, with the familiar opportunities to prove to the audience in due succession (1) that she can speak French (in this instance, however, the quality of the lady's *merci* is considerably strained); (2) that she can speak German (at least to the extent of pronouncing "fertig" as if it were "fatigue"); (3) that she is virtuous; (4) that she can sing; (5) that she can play the piano; (6) that she knows how to wear pretty frocks—in short, that she can do everything but act comedy. For Miss Francis Starr, a most agreeable and proficient interpreter of certain dramatic rôles, is apparently no more suited to act comedy than I am suited to act John Gabriel Borkman.

## II

STILL another play designed and set forth with obvious frankness for the exposition of three prepossessing frocks containing one prepossessing young lady is Mr. Hulbert Footner's "Shirley Kaye." In the first act, a mauve crêpe mousseline and the prepossessing young lady encounter an uncouth basso who hails from the baggy trouser belt and despises the women of the Idle Rich. In the second act, a cream-colored peau de soie and the prepossessing young lady, looking pensively out of the richly portière French window in the direction of the baggy basso, suddenly fling an impatient gesture toward the lavish chamber and, in voice vibrant with pent-up emotion, tensely exclaim "All-this-suffocates-me!" And in the last act, a black lace over yellow charmeuse and the prepossessing young lady sit on a bench beside the baggy basso and, with eyes fastened wistfully upon the grate-fire, exchange views with the baggy basso on the one they love, both parties eventually discovering to their own and the intense astonishment of the audience that it is each other they

have all the while been alluding to.

Mr. Footner sketches his characters by engagingly simple means. His Westerners indicate their ruggedness by saying "Hell" and making comical remarks about the butler. His Eastern society characters establish their hauteur and breeding by saying such things as "I do not possess that book" in place of "I haven't that book," and by sitting up as straight as pokers. Part of the play has to do with the outwitting of a man of affairs by the prepossessing young lady, who contrives to get hold of his proxies or something of the sort for a railroad directors' meeting. This brewed much airy and superior spoofing from the cave-men of the press, who professed to no belief in such feminine virtuosity. This spoofing I might persuade myself to digest with greater conviction were it not for the circumstance that these very same gentlemen in their very same reviews of the play showed that they had succumbed completely to the very same prepossessing young lady, Miss Elsie Ferguson, and, succumbing, had been outwitted by her into believing that she was an actress of high rank. The truth is that this Miss Ferguson is anything but a performer of the first water: she lacks variety, flexibility of voice, precision in enunciation and fluency of gesture among other essentials. But the truth also is that she is so very pretty, so very alluring and so thoroughly winning that she is quite able to outwit, for the time being, the critical sense. And when I say the critical sense, I allude not only to the critical sense of my confrères of the daily journals but also, and probably more particularly, to my own.

## III

IN the criticism of Miss Maude Adams, it has become a kind of *lex non scripta* that one must ever be exceeding chivalrous and speak nothing that is not good. Miss Adams occupies in the theater the place that a wife occupies in the home: no matter how tired one becomes of her, no matter how much one

becomes irritated, with the passing of time, by her eccentricities and her mannerisms, it is a law of social conduct that one keep up a show of loving her and refrain from saying aught ill for the public ear. Miss Adams and the tradition associated with her name have these many years succeeded in making a gentleman even of me.

I have known all along, of course, that she is a pretty poor actress as leading actresses go, and all along I have felt uncomfortable, as have many others, when she has spoiled beautiful lines by accompanying them with that peculiar neck-twist, that little semi-upper-cut gesture and other such idiosyncrasies of hers. But, following the ritual, I have regularly maintained a polite silence and have, with the rest of them, professed to be enthralled by the "dauntless frailty," the "brave wistfulness," the "odd, half-strangled utterance," and all the other of Miss Adams' attributes, qualities and trickeries. And what is more, so insistent is the thing, I am not even now going to write the truth about the lady. For what the use? After all, there is something rather fine about her, if not as an artist, at least as an institution of our theater. Her name and position, in these days of a stage so promiscuously adorned with boudoir alumnae and Wall Street ingénues, are of a pretty dignity. To her ears the tin-din of Broadway seems not to have penetrated. She has played and played only, during the real years of her career, the plays of fine artists. From all the cheapness, all the shoddy press-agency, all the trashy appurtenances of the show-shop, she has firmly and consistently drawn aside her skirts. And in a theater from which, by Sunday night "benefits," actors' dancing clubs, syndicated beauty talks and Red Cross balls, all remoteness and illusion have been made to vanish, such a figure as this—one of the few, few figures it has—cannot but be regarded with respect and held high in esteem. And I am not sure but what, after all, criticism may not fairly be conscious of such items, however seemingly foreign their nature.

Barrie's "A Kiss for Cinderella," Miss Adams' current offering, though not without its several typical Barrie conceits and lovely touches, fails to arouse my enthusiasms. On all sides I have heard tell of its "unalloyed charm," its "gently pathetic fancy," its "wistful loveliness" and all its winsome et ceteras, but I am unpersuaded. At no point save in its first act does it approach to the stature of Miss Gates' "Poor Little Rich Girl," which it in content closely resembles. Much of it is of an aridity difficult to reconcile with the name of its author and in the matter of imagination generally it is not only beneath the Gates' play but beneath Paul Apel's "Hans Sonnenstösser's Trip to Hell," a play of fabric similar to "The Poor Little Rich Girl" which was done abroad at an earlier date. The Barrie imagination has here taken flight as without a propeller. There is a loud inaugural buzz of engines, the beginning of a graceful mount, a wild indirection, a loopings the loops, a sudden stopping—with the moon still a million miles away.

Barrie, alas, is not always Barrie. Under the circumstances, therefore, the criticisms which hail the play and its author with ecstatic whoops put me in mind of one of Harry Tate's vaudeville acts I once saw in the old Tivoli music hall. . . . Tate, wondrously figged out as an aviator and surrounded on the field by a crowd of hysterical admirers, is beheld seated with majestic mien in an aeroplane, ready for a great flight. The engines start an enormous clatter; Tate pulls his cap tighter over his ears; and his hysterical admirers set up a great shouting. The din is terrific and all is ready for the wonderful volitation. The machine, however, though its engines continue to make an awful noise, refuses to budge. But the hysterical admirers are not to be denied. They promptly lie down on the ground on their Little Marys and, looking up at the stationary machine and their beloved hero, wildly wave their hats up at him as if he were really soaring high above them. . . .

# THE BOOKS OF THE IRISH

By H. L. Mencken

## I

THE Irish talent for impossibilities reveals itself fully in beautiful letters. The tasters of books tell us that romance is dead; the Irish revive the corpse and set it to dancing. They tell us that the grip of the epic is gone; the Irish resurrect Diarmuid and Grania, Naisi and Deirdre, and make them as real as Tom Jones. They tell us that symbolism passed with "When We Dead Awaken"; the Irish fill their poems with overtones and their very plays with spectral shapes. They tell us that no great literature is ever written in a tongue foreign to its makers; the Irish invade the language of the conqueror with Gaelic idioms and Gaelic modes of thought, and make a new English that is as sonorous and as savory as Marlowe's. They tell us that letters cannot prosper in the turmoil of politics; the Irish turn from the land laws to prosody without batting an eye, and stop a peasant comedy to shoot a red-coat, and face a firing-squad with sheaves of sonnets under their arms.

A people of fantastic and almost unearthly quality; a race that never was on land or sea! Its literature is at once the oldest and the youngest in Europe. Its grand tales of enchantment antedate the *Niebelungenlied*; its new tales of wonder postdate Walter Pater. The heirs of the scholars who taught Christendom how to write Latin verse in the fourth century now teach Anglo-Saxondom how to write English prose. Where is there another land with so fabulous a literary history—a history so high in its peaks at beginning and end, and so low in its dark valleys between? A hundred years ago, even

sixty or seventy years ago, no one read a genuinely Irish book. The literature of the country, in so far as it was known at all, was dismissed as barbarous and contemptible; it seemed no more than a mess of picaresque ballads and wild fairy tales, not always in good taste. But today, thanks to the labors of a few learned and devoted men, the old epics loom up in all the glow and majesty of the *Odyssey*, and out of the inspiration of the heroic past there has arisen a new literature that is as fecund, as various and as unmistakably national as any in Europe. Yeats and Dunsany are miles apart, and yet both are as Irish as Paddy's pig. Lady Gregory and AE. are separated even farther, and yet the essential Gaelicism of the one is as plain as the Gaelicism of the other. A school? A movement? Bosh! As well try to put Zola and Ellen Key, or Nietzsche and Tolstoi into double harness. What we have here is not merely a school or a movement, but a literature.

As I say, you will search far before you find parallels for its paradoxes. Perhaps there is one in Flanders, with Maeterlinck and Verhaeran writing French to match the French. Perhaps there is another in Norway, with Danish turned upon the Danes by Ibsen and Björnson. But in both cases literature had to wait until the turmoils of politics had died down, and men began to forget that their tongue was the tongue of a foreign foe. In Ireland there has been no forgetting. The fathers of the new literature, indeed, were political agitators almost more than they were literary pioneers. They essayed to dethrone England, English, the English

and all Englishdom. They turned to the ancient demi-gods as to inspiring heroes of nationality; they called upon the Gael to be a Gael once more. One and all, they learned Gaelic, thought in Gaelic, made Gaelic at once their symbol and their weapon. But the forces they faced were too sturdy for them. The English language engulfed them in its gigantic and irresistible tide; they were forced, willy-nilly, to yield to it; they ended by making it their own. No stranger surrender has ever been seen, and no stranger conquest by the conquered. The neo-Celts, pumping not only their materials, but even their forms out of Gaelic, have emptied into English the most lavish stream of new idioms and new rhythms that it has received since the days of Elizabeth. The style of such writers as Yeats, AE., Lady Gregory, Dunsany, and above all, Synge, is not merely a development of old styles, a refinement of Wilde and Pater, a tickling up of Arthur Symons; it is something quite new under the sun and as golden and gorgeous as the music of trumpets. He who has inner ears must needs rejoice in it forever; it is a debauch of lovely phrases; there is in it a ripple of endless surprises. No man who is genuinely an artist will ever write English hereafter without giving an ear to it, and borrowing from it, and owing inspiration to it.

As *cognoscenti* are aware, this grand revival of letters in Ireland has not gone unsung. It has, in fact, had processions of brass bands to whoop up its progress. Its chief protagonists, especially Yeats, George Moore and Lady Gregory, have revealed a fine gift for *réclame*; they have got into the newspapers of all the world, and made themselves talked of. It has provoked bitter and profitable animosities; the glare of politics has been thrown upon it from time to time; even the huge slaughter of the war has contrived to augment its romance. More important still, it has been fortunate enough to bring out, almost by accident, two or three talents of the very highest consideration, and the noise that these talents have made has

directed attention to the whole movement. The natural consequence has been a great deal of writing about it—books, pamphlets and articles; polemics, expositions and interpretations; defenses and denunciations; bosh and tosh unending. On the dramatic side alone it has engendered three times as much criticism as drama.

But until the present there was no single book that told the whole story of the revival in a coherent and accurate manner—that traced its origin and growth with sure knowledge, and discussed its leading figures with any understanding of their real purposes and relations, and separated the facts about them from the chaff of report and surmise. That lack is now supplied, in part, by "Literature in Ireland," by Thomas MacDonagh (*Stokes*), and in completeness by "Ireland's Literary Renaissance," by Ernest A. Boyd (*Lane*). The book of MacDonagh covers the field of neo-Celtic poetry, and, by an easy transition, the field of neo-Celtic prose style; the book of Boyd covers the whole progress of the new literature, from its beginnings in the translations of Mangan, Ferguson and O'Grady to its flowering in the tales and plays of Dunsany, the plays and travel sketches of Synge, the imaginary histories of George Moore, and the poems of Yeats, Colum, Hyde and Mac-Donagh. Boyd brought to the business exactly what it required, for he had behind him not only a thorough acquaintance with the whole body of the new literature, down to its most inconsiderable journalism, but also a personal intimacy with most of its leading spirits, and a sound comprehension of the remainder. His volume is judicious, sympathetic, informative and readable; it strikes the right middle course between punditic tediousness and gossipy garrulity. It puts him into equal fellowship with the best of the new Irish poets, dramatists and novelists, for he is the first historical (as opposed to polemical) critic that the movement has produced, and his first book is so intelligently done that it will

be a difficult thing for his successors to surpass it. . . .

Much misleading writing has resulted from the confusion of the Irish literary renaissance, as we know it today, with the original neo-Celtic movement, which still survives among the intransigents, and has been much prospered by the rebellion of last Easter. The two, despite their common sources and their possession of many principles and champions in common, are really quite distinct, for most of the new writers, while not forgetting their debt to Gaelic, accept the accomplished fact that Gaelic is dying out, whereas the more furious of the neo-Celtic patriots still cherish a hope of reviving it, and look to Irish freedom to get it on its legs again. The latter are thus not only not in accord with the former, but even in antagonism to them, for they see in the acceptance of English an abandonment of one of the most precious of Irish heritages. But this antagonism, after all, is more academic than real, for more than once, with Hibernian versatility, the same man has belonged to both camps, and the leader about whom the Gaelic movement chiefly revives, Dr. Douglas Hyde, is also the father of the Gaelicized English in which the best works of the revival are written. Mr. Boyd gives an example of Dr. Hyde's pioneering in his "Love Songs of Connacht" (1893) :

If I were to be on the Brow of Nefn and my hundred loves by my side, it is pleasantly we would sleep together like the little bird upon the bough. It is your melodious wordy little mouth that increased my pain and a quiet sleep I cannot get until I shall die, alas!

Here, obviously, is the pattern that Synge and Lady Gregory followed—the pattern brought to a perfection of design in the speeches of Christy Mahon and Pegeen Mike in "The Playboy of the Western World," in the gabble of the old paupers in "The Workhouse Ward," and, above all, in the unforgettable phrases of Maurya in "Riders to the Sea." Mr. MacDonagh discusses its genesis at great length, and shows

its dependence upon the idioms of Gaelic; Mr. Boyd traces its growth after Hyde's discovery of its possibilities. Synge, perhaps, did not borrow directly from Hyde, but he at least borrowed Hyde's trick of listening to the people of the countryside. Here we have, not an exact rendering of Gaelic idioms in a foreign tongue, but an effort to set down and preserve the peasants' difficulties with and blunderings in that tongue. It is thus from the true Irish, the countryfolk of Ireland, that the new dialect derives. There is as much of their naif mysticism and their homely humor in it as of their actual speech. It is racy of the soil. But there has been added to it an element that the soil never could have produced, and that is the element of conscious artistry, of aesthetic sensibility and sophistication. The new Irish are genuine artists. They hear and feel the most delicate overtones of speech. Their ears are as sensitive as Elizabethan ears to the slightest whisperings of beauty in words.

Of the two books now in court, Boyd's and MacDonagh's, you will find Boyd's by far the more informative and useful. MacDonagh confines himself to a relatively narrow field. It is Irish verse that chiefly interests him, for he was a poet himself and a good one, and his execution after the Easter rebellion was a heavy loss to letters. To appreciate him to the full, perhaps, one must be an Irishman; his very criticism is full of a Celtic twilight; he never proceeds by direct statement when he can proceed by allusion. There is a charm in all that, and Boyd misses it, but he makes up for it by marshaling his facts clearly and by writing in a straightforward and understandable manner. His book is particularly valuable for its illumination of the days of beginning. The greater part of new Irish criticism has concerned itself with end products, and especially with end products in the theater. Boyd avoids this false emphasis, and keeps the dramatic writings of the movement in their proper place. They are, of course, important; they

include some of the best stuff that Young Ireland has given forth. But they have got so much attention that there is danger of forgetting the Irish poets and novelists and essayists, and the work of the dramatists themselves in other fields. These lacks are met by the two volumes before us. They are interesting and valuable books. . . .

## II

I NURSED a secret hope that last month's article would bring me a wreath of ivy from the Authors' League of America, or, at all events, an invitation to guzzle *vin rouge* with the Poetry Society, for it was not only intrinsically meritorious, but it also had a certain historical and military interest, for it was my one hundredth mensual discourse in this place. No such celebration of the anniversary having been forthcoming, I herewith recall it myself. It is not often, on this bleak western front of civilization, that a critic holds a trench so long. The hazards of the trade are numerous and flabbergasting. The authors one puts to the torture have a habit of making furious and unexpected reprisals; the publishers undertake countless counter-offensives; there come fearful squawks from Old Subscribers when their prejudices are violated or their pet fictioneers are nailed to the wall; even the best of editors, in the midst of such a din, grows skittish at times, and wonders if a change of critics would not help his digestion. All in all, a harsh and forbidding life, and yet, after eight and a third years, I still pursue it, and if all goes well I hope to print my thousandth article in February, 1991. In those eight and a third years I have served under four editors, not including myself; I have grown two beards and shaved them off; I have eaten 3,086 meals; I have made more than \$100,000 in wages, fees, refreshers, tips and bribes; I have written 510,000 words about books and not about books; I have received, looked at, and thrown away nearly 3,000 novels; I have been

called a fraud 700 times, and blushed at the proofs; I have had more than 200 invitations to lecture before women's clubs, chautauquas, Y. M. C. A.'s, chambers of commerce, Christian Endeavor societies, and lodges of the Elks; I have received 150 pounds of letters of sweet flattery; I have myself written and published eight books, and reviewed them all favorably; I have had seventeen proposals of marriage from lady poets; I have been indicted by grand juries eight times; I have discovered thirty bogus geniuses; I have been abroad three and a half times, and learned and forgotten six foreign languages; I have attended 62 weddings, and spent nearly \$200 for wedding presents; I have gained 48 pounds in weight and lost 18 pounds, and have grown bald and gray; I have been converted by the Rev. Dr. Billy Sunday, and then recanted and gone back to the devil; I have worn out nine suits of clothes; I have narrowly escaped marriage four times; I have had lumbago and neuralgia; I have taken to horn-rimmed spectacles; I have eluded the white-slave traders; I have fallen downstairs twice; I have undergone nine surgical operations; I have read the *Police Gazette* in the barber-shop every week; I have shaken hands with Dr. Wilson; I have upheld the banner of the ideal; I have kept the faith, in so far as I could make out what it was; I have loved and lied; I have got old and sentimental; I have been torpedoed without warning.

Ah, the wonder and glory of life! The precession of the equinoxes! The mystery of tears and laughter! The toxic gurgle of a kiss! The way flowers shoot up, and horned cattle gambol in the fields! Eight and a third years seems a short while, and yet it has fetched me out of youth into middle age, and left my heart as bulged and battered as a gladiator's ear. Eight and a third years ago "Floradora" was still the rage, and the *New Republic* was unheard of, and Pilsener came in by every ship, and the muckrakers yet drove a fine trade, and Dr. Wilson was

happy and untempted at Princeton, and Major-General Roosevelt was a simple colonel of cavalry d. R. a. D., and Diaz was on deck in Mexico, and beefsteak was still 23 cents a pound, and God was in His heaven, and all was well with the world. Where are the charming young authoresses who came to THE SMART SET office in the autumn of 1908, the cuties who tripped in with their ingratiating smiles and their manuscripts under their arms; the sweet ones who were startled to find that a critic of the bozart could be so toothsome a youth, and so beautifully polite? Married, thirty, fat, sour, abhorrent! Where are the poets who sent in notice that I was a *schuft*, and that their dithyrambs would survive my snickers? Dried up, blown away, forgotten, accursed! Where are the new geniuses who inflamed the skies that year—the revolutionary novelists, the novel soothsayers? Done, desolated, damned! Where are all the Great Thinkers that Col. Roosevelt used to introduce with such loud whoops—the faunal naturalists, the Pastor Wagners, the Warrington Dawsons, the exotic poets? Passed on, alas, passed on! I remember great vogues, excitements, turmoils—for Bergson, for W. B. Trites, for Eucken, for Gorky, for Maeterlinck, for Arnold Bennett, for Leonard Merrick, for Chesterton, for Mathilde Serao, for Synge, for H. G. Wells, for William James, for Alfred Noyes, for Robert W. Service, for Signorina Montessori, for Ellen Key, for Chekoff, for Dr. Cook, for that poetizing jail-bird out West (I have even forgotten his name!) . . . *Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit!* *Mais où sont les neiges d'antan!* . . . *Wein nicht, Süsschen, 's gibt gar kein Use!* . . .

I glance back through my first compositions for this sodality and find some strange things. For example, this in the initial article: "Mary Roberts Rinehart is a new writer." Again, a solemn tirade against the platitudinousness of Upton Sinclair: evidently news in 1908. Yet again, good counsel to Mlle. Marie Corelli: "I should advise her to spend

six months in the chorus of a Broadway operetta." Operetta? They still existed eight and a third years ago! . . . In No. 2, a long hymn to Joseph Conrad, the opening anthem of a cantata yet going on. Conrad, in 1908, was scarcely more than a name on this side of the water, and only a hushed whisper on the other side. All of his greatest stories had been written, but they had dogged about from publisher's office to publisher's office, and each successive book had come out with a new imprint. Run your eye down the list: Macmillan, Appleton, Dodd-Mead, Scribner, Doubleday, McClure, Putnam—seven different publishers for his first seven books! He was a long time getting down, but down he went in the end. Today his works are offered to cognoscenti in an elegant series of navy-blue, limp-leather volumes: very roycrofty, indeed. I am almost tempted to lay in a set. Not only does it soothe the cultured eye, but it would also save wear and tear of the first editions, which are now soaring in value. My natural sagacity, which functions in profane affairs as well as in *belles lettres*, led me to accumulate them while they still sold at par, and they now fortify me against the *Canis lupus*. "Almayer's Folly," published at six shillings, is worth from \$25 to \$35, according to your passion for it. "The Nigger of the Narcissus," in good condition, would probably bring more. Even so recent a book as "Some Reminiscences," published in 1912, carries a premium of \$10 or \$12. The whole set was offered a year or so ago for \$150. I doubt that it could be brought together today for less than \$225. The graft of book reviewers, if they have foresight, is thus seen to be very fair. A forward-looker, I have acquired wealth, and eat and drink, perhaps, more than is strictly decent.

And Dreiser! Back in 1908 only "Sister Carrie" was behind him, and even "Sister Carrie" was but little known, for the first edition had been suppressed by a snuffling publisher, and the second edition had but recently

reached the book-stalls. That first edition is now so rare that collectors bid against one another for every stray copy that shows itself. It would be a good idea to hunt up the old plates and print a forgery; nine collectors out of ten have been pleasantly deceived by the forged first edition of Thackeray's "Second Funeral of Napoleon." Such risks add to the charm of book collecting, for every professor of the art believes firmly that he himself is beyond being fooled, and so it joys him to think of the swindles perpetrated on the other fellow. Incidentally, I know a dealer who lately bought a fine copy of the original "Sister Carrie" for twenty-five cents. He found it in a junk-shop, and leaped from the place like an archdeacon stung by wasps the moment the transaction was closed. Human-like, he couldn't help boasting about his coop, and so I was able, on juridic grounds, to beat him down to a couple of dollars for the prize. I in my turn then emitted oxygen, whereupon a kind friend, unsuccessful in his own hunt for the book, affably accepted it from me as a present. I had, of course, another copy; I shall leave it to some orphan asylum when I die, and so help to save Dreiser from hell. The Comstocks, as I write, bawl for his blood on the ground that Eugene Whitla, in "The 'Genius,'" is a mammal, and occasionally looses a big, big damn. By the time this article is printed, he may be safely roosting in some kindly jail, with leisure to read his own books. If he gets more than six months he will have time to finish them. Then, perhaps, he will fall to work upon a novel in strict accord with the prevailing Methodist canon—a novel whose males confine their carnalities to sly glances at servant girls, and to fighting their way into Billy Sunday meetings "for men only," and to the diligent study of such literature as "What a Girl of 45 Should Know," and II Samuel, xi, 2-27. . . .

I am often asked if I enjoy my job, and reply frankly that I do. There is, at all events, constant variety in it; a

surprise is always around the corner; that is a dull month which doesn't produce two or three genuinely interesting books. I glance back over eight and a third years and recall such things as Sudermann's "The Indian Lily," and Anatole France's "The Revolt of the Angels," and Lord Dunsany's "The Book of Wonder," and Arnold Bennett's "The Old Wives' Tale," and Dreiser's "The Titan," and H. G. Wells' "Ann Veronica," and Mrs. Wharton's "Ethan Frome," and Max Beerbohm's "Zuleika Dobson," and Conrad's "Victory"—I glance back and decide at once that my time has not been wasted. It is a superlative pleasure to dredge such glowing and memorable books out of the stream of drivel and commonplace, the endless avalanche of balderdash by the Oppenheims and Chamberses, the Bindlosses and Hall Caines, the Corellis and Phillipottses, the jitney Richard Hardings Davises and second-table O. Henrys. Sound literature, indeed, is being produced in this, our age. The rate of emission of good books is more rapid than ever before. Moreover, it seems to me that discrimination is increasing, despite the flood of shoddy wares. There is still a vast market for such sentimental slobber as one finds in the "Pollyannas" and "Bambis," but it is no longer mistaken for great art, as was done with the slobber of Dickens. We have as many boob-thrillers and mountebanks as ever before, but we do not revere Hall Caine as Bulwer-Lytton was revered. We yet have rages for sensational poets, but they do not last as long as the rage for Byron, nor do so many folk succumb to them. Puritanism still wars upon all art among us, but its arm grows weak and the devices on its banners are laughed at. I doubt that any truly first-rate book has gone unrecognized for twenty years past; I doubt that any first-rate book has gone unpublished. If a new Samuel Butler should print a new "Erewhon" tomorrow, even the *Nation* would be aware of it within a year.

The United States, of course, produces relatively little sound writing of

its own, but it has at least grown eagerly hospitable to the sound writing that is produced elsewhere. Our thirst for foreign novelties, in truth, is almost as avid as the Germans'. Scarcely a month goes by that some new Selma Lagerlöf or Leonid Andreyieff or Emil Verhaeren or Mathilde Serao or Henri Bergson is not discovered, devoured and hymned. The Americanos got down Ibsen long before the English; the first performance of an Ibsen play in English, indeed, was given in Louisville back in 1882. They embraced Synge while the Dublin mob was yet heaving benches at him. They saw the first adequate performances of Shaw. They were bemused by the moonshine of Maeterlinck before France gave him a thought. They are hot for English novelists who are scarcely heard of at home. . . . One of the causes of this alacrity of welcome, perhaps, lies in the somewhat appalling mediocrity of our domestic produce in beautiful letters. Our books, in the main, lack genuine distinction; they just miss arousing the imagination. The country, for example, is full of novelists who have shown promise and then failed. Robert Herrick is one. He began auspiciously, but today he wallows in claptrap. His trouble is plain enough: he is clever, but not profound; he has facility, but he lacks ideas. Edith Wharton is another. She rose to the peak of "Ethan Frome" and then settled down into a valley of fustian. A third is Robert Grant. He flew all the signals of great talent—and then hauled them in. Howells, James Lane Allen, John Luther Long, Hamlin Garland and the rest of that elder

company have run their race. Churchill has succumbed to the national platitudinousness. Miss Cather and Mrs. Watts have yet to strike twelve. Stephen French Whitman, Ernest Poole, Henry Milner Rideout, Owen Johnson and a dozen others of their quality seem to be done for; the lure of the *Saturday Evening Post* has finished most of them.

But let us not wail and gnash our teeth. We still have Dreiser, and despite "The 'Genius,'" he will probably do his best work hereafter. He is the one novelist among us who shows no response whatever to the variable winds of public favor; he hacks out his path undeterred by either praise or blame; a sort of blind fury of creation seems to move him. And we still have two or three other men who are sound artists, and yet as American as trading stamps or chewing gum: Booth Tarkington, George Ade, Harry Leon Wilson. All have yielded themselves to temptation; all have stooped for the shekel. And yet, when everything has been said, Ade's "Fables in Slang" come near being the best comic writing of our time in any language, and Tarkington's "Penrod" is a book that will long outlive Tarkington, and Wilson has done things in "Bunker Bean" and again in "Ruggles of Red Gap" that belong to satire at its best, and hint clearly at what he could do on a larger scale if he would only spit on his hands and make the effort.

I speak only of novelists. Of poets and other such lesser fauna, I shall discourse, perchance, at some later conference.



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